1885

AND AFTER

NATIVE SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

[illegible] LAURIE [illegible] AND JAMES B. WAL[illegible]

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Introduction

The year 1985 represents the centenary of the event commonly known as the North-West "Rebellion." In recent years, intensive analysis of the events associated with 1885 has resulted in new interpretations of this significant component of Native history. No longer is Louis Riel described as a lunatic, or Chiefs Poundmaker and Big Bear as blood-thirsty savages bent on insurrection. No longer are the Métis and Indians who took up arms in 1885 dismissed simply as rebels, raging against the encroachments of a superior immigrant society. No longer are Sir John A. Macdonald and other government officials uncritically accepted as disinterested guardians of the national interest. We have, in fact, only begun to fully understand many of the significant issues and personalities of that day. It is in the interest of furthering that understanding that this volume is presented.

In early May of 1985, the Native Studies Department of the University of Saskatchewan hosted a conference on the theme "1885 and After." In bringing together leading Native and non-Native academics and interested members of the public, the conference aimed to reassess both the processes leading up to the conflict in 1885 and the subsequent impact of the Rebellion on Native society in the North-West. Most of the papers presented at that conference are contained in this volume.

The papers have been grouped into two distinct sections. Part I is concerned with events leading up to and including the actual outbreak of hostilities in 1885, while Part II focusses on the transition of Native society in the aftermath of 1885. Such a division is not meant to imply that the Rebellion was a major turning point in the historic development of Native society, since many of the features that characterized that society for much of the twentieth century had historic antecedents which predate 1885. By the same token, the division should not obscure the long-term importance of what happened at Batoche and elsewhere. The Rebellion represents an important event in a long historic process through which Native people in western Canada were dispossessed of their lands and autonomy. It not only confirmed existing trends aimed at the destruction of Native society, but also guaranteed that those trends would remain unchallenged for years to come. Indeed, in the wake of the events of 1885, government attempts to further undermine Native society intensified.

Fittingly, the opening paper in Part I is by G.F.G. Stanley. His paper, entitled "The Last Word on Louis Riel — The Man of Several Faces," is offered as a final comment on an historic figure he first researched some fifty years ago. It speaks to the importance of historic interpretation, as opposed to historic fact, and identifies some of the social and intellectual factors that have shaped the changing image of Riel over the last century. As a long-recognized authority on the Métis leader, Dr. Stanley also defines the intellectual origins of his own work on Riel and places that work within the overall context of historiographical trends.

The next two essays serve to broaden the context of discussion. The one, written by Olive Dickason, compares the Micmac wars against the British in Nova Scotia (1713–63) with the armed confrontations between the government of Canada and the Natives in the North-West (1869–85). It concludes that, although the two theatres of war varied in character, "the fundamental nature of the conflicts was the same, that of people fighting an intruding power for their lands and for their right to self-determination ...." The other paper, the work of A.I. Silver, deals with the impact of the North-West Rebellion on eastern Canada. It argues that, while the events of 1885 were newsworthy in the Maritimes, they became a major issue only in central Canada. There, the French of Québec and the English of Ontario tended to interpret the events largely according to their own cultural predispositions and experience. As a result, the Rebellion became a component of the long-standing racial and religious struggle that had tormented those two provinces since their inception.

These papers are followed by four studies concerned primarily with Métis issues. André Lalonde, in a discussion of colonization companies, notes that the Macdonald government created such companies in order to populate the North-West as quickly as possible and, in the process, offer its friends the opportunity to make money. He argues that, despite these objectives, the granting of land to the Prince Albert Colonization Company served only to alienate the Métis of St. Louis de Langevin and exacerbate the tensions which ultimately caused the North-West Rebellion. Among the results was the irony that the Rebellion retarded western settlement and jeopardized the success of all colonization companies. Paul Driben, using an anthropological approach, suggests that the Métis were members of what is known as a "purchase society," and that one way of interpreting Métis reactions in both 1869–70 and 1885 is to see them as revitalization movements responding to social disorganization and cultural stress. Donald McLean, likewise dealing with the question of causality, maintains that the so-called Métis Rebellion of 1885 was really the result of a government conspiracy. Working through Lawrence Clarke as *agent provocateur*, insists McLean, Sir John A. Macdonald and his government manipulated the Métis into rebellion so that the suppression of the uprising could be used as an excuse to secure additional funding for the failing Canadian Pacific Railway. Lastly, Thomas Flanagan examines the issue of Louis Riel's sanity. Arguing the need for a non-psychiatric analysis in understanding the Métis leader, Flanagan concludes that for reasons of justice and personal recognition, Riel chose to play the role of divinely inspired prophet and that, as a leader of the Métis, he acted both consistently and in keeping with the religious understanding of the day. As he puts it, "it was certainly arrogant of Riel to have thought of himself as God's chosen prophet, but it was not irrational, given the network of assumptions he shared with other ultramontane Catholics."

The final group of papers in Part I is addressed to the Indian context of 1885. The essay by Noel Dyck deals with the Reserve Agricultural Programme implemented in the prairie West prior to 1885. It challenges the notion that there was something in the Indian's personality and culture that made him unequal to the demands of a settled agrarian way of life. On the contrary, the real cause of failure was unrealistic government policies framed by people who had no commitment whatsoever to self-supporting and self-governing Indian communities. It was the Rebellion, adds Dyck, that sealed the fate of the Reserve Agricultural Programme and provided a pretext for a coercive system of reserve administration that lasted into the twentieth century. Also focussing on Indian administration is the paper on Indian Agents by F.L. Barron. Its thesis is that, although agents were not as corrupt and immoral as some believed them to be, the personal and collective characteristics of some agents were instrumental in causing Indian discontent in the years leading up to the Rebellion. The final paper, by A. Blair Stonechild, is entitled "The Indian View of the 1885 Uprising." Stonechild argues that the Indian account of the Rebellion differs significantly from traditional interpretations by non-Natives. He points out that Indians were committed to a peaceful negotiation and resolution of outstanding grievances and that violence erupted in 1885 only as a result of the misunderstanding of Indian motives and actions. Despite the fact that Indians were opposed to the insurrection, he says, they were subjected to a prolonged suppression through which they lost control over their lives.

Part II opens with Diane Payment's paper on "Batoche After 1885," which makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the immediate post-1885 period. As she notes, contrary to a long accepted view, the Métis did not leave the area of Batoche *en masse* after 1885, and their economy did not completely disintegrate. A period of transition developed in which the Métis continued to struggle for the right to their own system of land tenure, for agricultural and other purposes, while moving into other areas of the regional economy. Conflict between the Métis and the government remained, largely as a result of "conflicting ideologies" regarding land tenure, and of the inability or reluctance of the Métis to quickly adopt a life as full-time agriculturalists.

The relationship between the Métis and the federal government over the issue of land tenure finds further expression in Ken Hatt's paper on the North-West Rebellion Scrip Commissions. In this paper, Hatt argues that during the period 1885 to 1889, the federal government attempted to maintain social harmony by appearing to solve Métis land grievances through Scrip Commissions, while at the same time ensuring that the State's function of capital accumulation, in this case the securing of western lands for expansion, would not be undermined. Many of the assertions made by Hatt conflict with those offered by Thomas Flanagan in previous work. For this reason, Flanagan has been provided the opportunity of commenting on Hatt's paper, and argues that Hatt has misunderstood much of his work.

Next, we have Donald Smith's description of the personal transformation of Riel's secretary of 1884-85, William Henry Jackson. Returning to the North-West in 1907, Jackson, now "Jaxon," was startled at the transition the region had undergone. Perhaps even more alarming to Jaxon was the fact that the Métis and Indian peoples had been largely neglected in the development of the West, and that their conditions remained just as desperate as they had been in 1885. In an effort to correct many of the wrongs done to the Métis population, Jaxon undertook to write a history of the Rebellion from the perspective of the Métis participants, and to preserve Métis historic sites in and around Batoche. Unfortunately, Jaxon never successfully completed either project.

The next two papers, by John Jennings and John Tobias, shift the focus somewhat to examine the situation of the Indian people in the post-1885 period. John Jennings describes how the understanding and admiration which members of the North West Mounted Police and the Indians felt toward each other began to erode after 1885. The Police, as agents of the government's policy of assimilation, were increasingly used to control the Indians and restrict their mobility. Victimized by this policy, the Indians of Saskatchewan responded in the early twentieth century with what the second author, John Tobias, refers to as the "treaty rights movement." In addition to the agricultural and education programmes, 1885 and subsequent years saw the introduction of the pass system, the outlawing of many Indian religious ceremonials, and the abolition of the indigenous leadership structure. This was done in an attempt to expedite assimilation under a process referred to as "detribalization." However, by 1910, the few surviving signatories of the treaties began to argue that Indian autonomy had been guaranteed by the treaties, and that the assimilation policy was clearly in violation of treaty terms. Tobias also argues that the present treaty rights movement, with its emphasis on the inviolable nature of the treaties, is in contradiction with the view of the original Indian signatories who saw the treaties as inherently flexible and subject to alteration as conditions warranted.

Valuable insight into the development and dynamics of Métis society in the northern part of Canada is provided in the papers by Coates and Morrison, and Waldram. Ken Coates and William Morrison argue that in much of the Mackenzie Valley area of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, Native cultural identity was "more than a matter of blood," being based substantially on the lifestyle pursued by the individual. Genetics alone were not enough to ensure the development of a mixed blood society, separate from Indians and non-Natives. As these authors note, the actions of the federal government, through such processes as treaty and scrip allotments and the Indian Act, served to divide the Native population. Their paper provides an historical context for James Waldram's discussion of the development of "ethnostatus" distinctions in western subarctic Native communities. Waldram, in dealing primarily with the post-1960 period, argues that the development of the concept of legal "Indian" status, divorced from cultural considerations, has created many problems in small communities among populations which are essentially culturally homogeneous. Ill-feelings have developed between the status Indians on the one hand, and the Métis and non-status Indians on the other, as a result of the differential delivery of programmes and services by different governments and Native organizations.

It is appropriate that the final paper in this volume be offered by a prominent member of the Native community. In this paper, Wayne McKenzie, of the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, elaborates on the concept of Native "self-government." In outlining the institutions that Saskatchewan Métis feel need to be developed to allow them to share equally in Canada as a self-governing people, McKenzie describes self-government as an inevitable process. It is up to Canadians to decide whether they will assist in this process, or seek to continue the trend of the past by impeding it. As McKenzie notes, "We are determined that we will become a self-governing people."

The events of 1885 have had an enduring symbolic importance in the Native community. As the government's policies of assimilation took hold, the years following the Rebellion were ones of extreme hardship for the Native population of the West. Perhaps more than any other event, the Rebellion has come to symbolize the process of subjugation through which Native peoples lost their cultural and political autonomy. And yet, this loss of freedom did not result in the demise of Native society as many predicted. On the contrary, through effective leadership and collective will, the Native peoples of the West have not only survived as distinct entities, but also have recently begun to reclaim both their lost autonomy and rightful place in Canadian history. Within this context, the resistance offered by Gabriel Dumont and others in 1885 has served as an important inspiration to Native resurgence in Canada, most vividly expressed today in the insistent demand for Native self-government. It may be that 1985, the centenary year of the Rebellion, represents the symbolic beginning of a new era of self-determination for the Métis and Indian peoples of Canada.

F. LAURIE BARRON
JAMES B. WALDRAM
University of Saskatchewan, 1985

Part I

Rebellion Era: The Evolution Of Conflict

The Last Word on Louis Riel — The Man of Several Faces

George F.G. Stanley

> "La question Métisse est comme une charrette. Pour la faire marcher, il faut deux roues et dans le moment, il nous en manque une. Si nous la voulons, il nous faut aller la chercher dans le Montana, le long du Missouri." (Charles Nolin, 1884)[1]

1

Louis Riel! The name evokes a variety of images in the minds of Canadians. Of the many people who have played a role on the historical stage in Canada, Louis "David" Riel has, in the last fifty years, become one of the most popular and most publicized. And yet this has not always been true. Admittedly Riel's trial and execution, a century ago, produced a spate of political pamphlets and polemics. But then the poor man lapsed into obscurity. Canadians focussed their attention on the politicians, the men who brought the Canadian Confederation into being, and those who tried to prevent it from becoming a vital political reality. During the first half century of our national existence as a federal union, Riel did have his place in our history texts, but it was a very small place indeed. French-speaking Canadians felt sympathy for him, but it was a sympathy frequently marred by the recollection of his apostasy; English-speaking Canadians never could, never did overlook the execution of the Ontario Orangeman, Thomas Scott, by a Métis court-martial in 1870, and held Riel responsible for it.

2

Since the conclusion of World War II, Canadian attitudes have undergone a change. Riel's life has become the subject of biographies, academic and popular, documented and otherwise, of poems and plays, in English and French, of an opera — probably the most ambitious and best produced by a Canadian musician — and an overture. His statue has been erected in two provincial capitals,[2] although not yet in Ottawa, the capital city from which he fled in 1874, when expelled from Parliament. His grave in St. Boniface has become a site visited annually by pilgrims and political radicals, most of whom he would probably have repudiated in the days when he presided over the Provisional Government of Assiniboia. The University of Alberta, with monies from the Social Science Federation of Canada, a body funded by Ottawa, has published a complete annotated edition of his writings. And on the political scene, efforts are being made to secure for him a posthumous pardon for the "treason" for which he was hanged one hundred years ago.

Why this change? Because historical writing, like history itself, does not stand still. It is subject to intellectual influences which mould its shape and content. Historical events and institutions must be considered against the background of the changing cultural and intellectual foci that have conditioned their evolution. Historians live in what Rudy Wiebe has called a "fictive present," collecting past facts in order to create an understanding of the world in the light of the "expected future."[3] In simple words, this means that, since the events of Canadian history were dominated in the second half of the nineteenth century by the imperial idea, historical writing reflected the idea of empire as a creative, philosophical, political and religious force. The Canadian Confederation was the imperial idea in action; Canada's expansion from sea to sea was natural and irresistible. Natural, because it was part of the expansion of the British Empire. Irresistible, because Empire was part of the divine plan, whether it was British, French or American; because imperial expansion brought peace, order, justice, liberty and Christianity to troubled lands, and, above all, to the benighted Natives of the world. The "white man's burden"; how often we used to hear those words from pulpit and platform. And we, white Canadians, were expected to bear our share of that burden, in the West and in the North. I am not being cynical. French men and English men in British North America might disagree on points of detail as to what their share of the burden would be; what kind of Christianity, for instance, they would take to the heathen; but they were all agreed on the general principle. White expansion was, therefore, a matter of religious faith, an obligation. It was also a matter of scientific faith. During the nineteenth century, evolution, biological and social, was gradually gaining acceptance in academic circles. What a combination of strengths; doctors of Divinity allied with doctors of Science. Nothing could resist it! Natives of any colour or race who tried, could and would be swept away. It was the Will of God and His prophet, Charles Darwin. Riel, Indians, Métis, what chance had they of standing by themselves against the inevitable? Of course they failed, as one would have expected them to fail. Why then, should history students spend much time on Riel and his rebellions? A footnote in recorded history; that would be sufficient.

The next question is obvious. Why then, have Riel and his adherents once more seized the public imagination in Canada, as they have done in recent years? I suggest that every period in history has, within itself, not only its heritage of values carried forward from the past, its haunting ghosts of former empires, but also the seeds of future change. And of these seeds of change, the most important is that of new ideas imported or intruding from outside the confines of the national group. In Canada, as elsewhere in the early years of the twentieth century, the imperial idea was beginning to lose some of its vitality and popularity. That was one of the legacies of World War I. Woodrow Wilson talked about "clearly recognizable lines of nationality" and "the freest opportunity of autonomous development."[4] The Treaty of Versailles administered the knockout blow. Even the British dominions, Canada included, were on the way to becoming national entities. In 1926 the term "British Empire" was replaced by "British Commonwealth"; and in 1931 the Statute of Westminster gave nation status to the Dominions. By the end of World War II, imperialism was dead: long live the nation state![5] The British Empire, over the dissolution of which Winston Churchill had declared he would never preside, simply ceased to exist. Canadians generally were aware of what had happened and recognized that the old spiritual cupboard was bare: that the concept of Empire could never again provide them with intellectual nourishment. It had changed from a living thing into an historical artifact.

The sequel was that Canadians became aware of the irrelevance of their earlier attitudes towards Native peoples, those "lesser breeds without the law." It was hard to regard as inferior a Native Indian who fought beside you in the ranks.[6] Or who might carry the King's commission. Is it surprising that some Canadians at least should begin to wonder if the pale-faced nations were really as God-blessed, as high-minded and as altruistic as they previously had thought them to be? Were the white man's social institutions, his mores, his forms of government, his jurisprudence, his educational theories as superior as the whites had always taken for granted?

Perhaps the people who resisted denationalization and cultural assimilation in Europe were the real heroes. Is it to be wondered at, under the impact of these changing ideas, that white Canadians should begin to take another look at Riel, to reconsider his role in western Canadian history, and look upon the Métis leader as a hero, a kind of a "resistance" hero, and the Métis insurrection as the armed protest of a small national group struggling against cultural absorption? It can be argued that to picture the Métis as "freedom fighters" and Riel as a hero-figure in this sense, is going too far. But I do suggest that, even if the comparison is overdrawn, this is a view that is widespread today in Canada, certainly among the Native people themselves and among a not inconsiderable number of whites as well. That is why, I suggest, historical writing about Riel has, of necessity, become contemporary in its outlook.

3

Historical research in recent years has not added greatly to our knowledge of the details of Riel's career. The sources have, on the whole, been within comparatively easy reach of scholars for many years. We have long known that he was born in St. Boniface, 22 October 1844; that he was educated at the local school in St. Boniface and then sent to the Sulpician-managed Collège de Montréal to be educated for the priesthood; that he left in his final year of formal schooling without graduating, tried his hand at law, and at writing poetry, became engaged, only to have his engagement broken by his fiancée's parents, apparently on racial grounds, and finally returned to St. Boniface in 1868. We know that he had been exposed in Montréal to the wordy, emotional controversies over the union proposals which ended in Confederation in 1867. We know that on his return to Red River, he placed himself at the head of a group of Métis, concerned about their future under Canadian rule and that he occupied Fort Garry with an armed force, ignoring the decrepit administration of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Having refused to accept as the political head of state a Canadian-appointed Lieutenant-Governor, William MacDougall, Riel called for an election and formed a Métis Provisional Government. During the next few months, he carried on official talks with Canadian emissaries from

Ottawa; suppressed the armed efforts of a group of Canadians resident in the settlement to overthrow his Provisional Government; executed one Thomas Scott, an Ontario Orangeman and malcontent; and sent delegates to Canada to negotiate the entry of the Red River Settlement into the Canadian federation as a province. In this sense Riel may legitimately be looked upon as the father of Manitoba.

Meanwhile, however, the federal authorities despatched a military force to Manitoba, and Riel, trusting Bishop Alexandre Taché to obtain an amnesty for him, offered no armed resistance, but distrusting the troops, fled from Red River. A Canadian Lieutenant-Governor, Adams Archibald of Nova Scotia, took over the provincial administration. Elected several times to the federal Parliament, Riel was never able to take his seat. Instead, he took refuge in asylums, first in Montréal and later in Québec. On his release he made his way to the western United States where he became an American citizen in 1883, finally settling down as a school teacher in Montana.

In 1884, on the invitation of the French and English half-breeds of the North Saskatchewan valley, Louis Riel returned to Canada to organize and lead a political agitation designed to secure for the half-breed population titles to the lands they already occupied. Following the pattern of action he had adopted in Manitoba in 1870, Riel sent a petition to Ottawa, formed a Provisional Government, and waited to be invited to negotiate with Ottawa. But 1885 was not 1869-70. This time the federal authorities sent a military force to the West before, not after, opening negotiations with the Native peoples. Riel met force with force and was defeated. His prayers and hopes for divine intervention were of no avail. Not God but a stipendiary magistrate sat in judgement upon him. Riel was charged with and convicted of treason in Regina and condemned to death. Despite every effort on the part of Québec politicians and, despite even the threats of the collapse of the Anglo-French *modus vivendi* that had been Sir John A. Macdonald's source of strength before and after Confederation, Riel was hanged at Regina, 16 November 1885.

4

That, in outline, is the biography of Louis Riel. There is little or no controversy about the facts. They are available to any historian who takes the trouble to find them in libraries and archival establishments; but the facts, by themselves, don't do very much to broaden our understanding of the man himself and what motivated him. History is more than a chronicle of facts and dates. That is history devoid of meaning. A suitable comparison would be a statue lacking facial features. As Francis Bacon put it, "that part being wanting which doth most show the spirit and life of the person."[7] Obviously, if the details of the face be unknown, the sculptor must add them in such a way as to give an element of personality to the figure carved in stone or cast in bronze. By the same token, the historian is obliged to portray his subject in a manner that will convey the significance of his subject's being to his readers. In other words, he must portray his subject's face in a credible fashion.

To Riel's own contemporaries the Métis leader's face was clear and unmistakable. They believed they knew who Riel was: a western Métis who reflected, in his career, the Anglo-French politico-cultural conflict imposed on this country by the defeat of France by Great Britain in 1763 and by the defeat of Great Britain by the United States in 1783. By defeating France in the Seven Years' War, Great Britain acquired a body of French (Canadian) subjects and by losing to the Americans, Britain acquired a body of English (American) subjects, who, whether they liked it or not, were compelled by defeat and common misery to become co-partners in a new colonial venture. English and French, Protestant and Catholic, the products of different cultural and political systems, but living within the boundaries of British North America, thus became uneasy and contentious rivals, ever on the offensive and on the defensive against each other. A happy situation for the United States, which as long as the Franco- and Anglo-Canadians squabbled with each other, would have little to fear economically or politically from the British colonies on the eastern shore of the St. Lawrence.

Given the traditional rivalries of French and English Canadians, exacerbated by arguments over Confederation, it was not unreasonable for historians and novelists, as well as for politicians, to see the events which transpired in the Red River and Saskatchewan River valleys as western manifestations of the same rivalries that existed in the valleys of the Ottawa and the St. Lawrence. That is why events in western Canada, whether related by historians, novelists or poets, appear as little more than the projection to the prairies of the religious and political quarrels of central Canada. Given a knowledge of their traditional outlooks, was it unreasonable for Ontario writers in 1870 to see Riel as the "murderer" of Thomas Scott, the Ontario Orangeman; was it unreasonable for Québec writers to see him as a defender of French rights and separate schools in Manitoba? Riel's Provisional Government was legitimate or illegitimate, according to the cultural and national background of the beholder. This interpretation of the Red River troubles carried over to the North-West rising in 1885. To one group Riel appeared as the "rebel" solely responsible for the outbreak, and for the killings that followed, perpetrated by Indians and Métis alike; a man inspired by personal ambition; a cold-blooded murderer, and, particularly a French, Catholic murderer. To the other group, Riel was seen as a poor, pathetic madman struggling to help his people or as a brave persistent champion of the French fact in the West, resisting the assimilation of his culture by the English, and the destruction of his faith by Pope-hating Protestants. These contrasting views are to be found in the speeches delivered on the floor of the House of Commons, in newspaper editorials, in the poems and in the novels of the day.

In February 1870, the editor of *The Globe* of Toronto referred to Riel as "The Great Potentate of the North," increasing the volume of his criticism in April to include Fathers Ritchot and Lestanc and suggesting Riel was only the "front" man in Bishop Taché's "political game of chess" with Canada; the clergy had "deeper designs than the uneducated French were aware of" letting loose "a monster whose craft, condition and ferocity are greater than any one supposed." *La Minerve*'s characterization of Riel was rather different. To the French language newspaper of Montréal, Riel was "un jeune homme de grande abilité ... éloquent dans ses discours." *La Minerve* accepted Sir John A. Macdonald's assurance that the military expedition being sent to Red River was bound on a mission of peace. In fact, said *La Minerve*, "L'envoi des troupes lui répugnait."[8] The same positions were taken in 1885. The English-language *Gazette* declared that "when Riel is captured he ought to be strung up on the first convenient tree without ceremony." *La Minerve* replied by asking if Riel was "Suffisamment équilibre pour comprendre toute la responsabilité de ses actes." Thus while the English language journals demanded that Riel "be hanged, or —!," the francophone newspapers were crying that Riel "shall not be hanged, or —!" An anonymous letter sent to Macdonald put the issue in these terms: "If the French of Montreal and Quebec think that he [Riel] is a marter [*sic*] and that he is sure of going strait [*sic*] to Heaven the sooner he goes there the better."[9]

That was how the popular press portrayed Riel. The poets and novelists followed the same line, reflecting their racial bias. Louis Fréchette, said by some to have been an associate of Riel in the years prior to the latter's return to Red River in 1868, included two poems in his epic *La Légende d'un Peuple* entitled "Le Dernier Martyr" and "Le Gibet de Riel."[10] Across the Ottawa River, in Ontario, an obscure novelist by the name of J.E. Collins, wrote a fictional account, *The Story of Louis Riel, the Rebel Chief*, in which Métis were described as "a debased sort and unfit socially to mix with those who had kept their race free from taint." Elsewhere he refers to Riel as "the wily traitor" and "the arch agitator ... foaming with rage" at any opposition and whose sneer, when his advances were rejected by a Métisse girl, "sounded like an envenomed hiss." Collins overworked his adjectives, portraying Scott as a "noble" and "heroic" figure when encountering the "craven," "foul," miscreant Riel. The Indians too are said to have had "fiendish faces" and "wolf-like eyes." Collins saw the Abbé Ritchot, Riel's ecclesiastic adviser, only as a "great swaggering, windy" priest, and O'Donoghue as "coarse and loud-mouthed." After such a dose of venom, the reader is relieved to find that the women, Métis or Indian, are invariably "beautiful with dusky eyes."[11]

Even musicians got into the act. But their efforts are now long, perhaps happily, forgotten. Do you suppose any militia units that took part in the events of 1885 still march to the tune of J.E. Whitney's *The Otter Grand March*, or can anybody remember or has anybody today ever danced to fiddles scratching out the melody of Annie Delaney's *Batoche Polka*?[12]

Canadian historians reflected much the same views as the writers of fiction, although, of course, in more restrained and dignified prose. The elements of racial and religious controversy were still there. And they continued to dominate our historical writing until the nineteen thirties. Certainly this is true of Georges Dugast's *Histoire Véridique*, published in Montréal in 1905. Dugast, who was personally acquainted with Riel in St. Boniface, portrayed the Métis chief as a martyr whose actions were understandable and excusable. It was still the Riel, the victim of prejudice, who appeared in Jean Bruchési's *Histoire du Canada pour tous*.[13] This is also the Riel the Abbé Lionel Groulx saw when he visited St. Boniface in 1944, the centenary of Riel's birth, and used the occasion to attack the "destructive" public school system and the myopic vision of English-speaking Manitobans.[14] The visage of Riel, the defender of French, Catholic rights was the one seen by the Catholic priest, Adrien Morice,[15] and the French historian, Auguste-Henri de Trémaudan. Trémaudan shared Groulx's view that Riel was the foremost defender of French culture in western Canada. In the "Avertissement" to his *Histoire de la Nation Métisse*, he wrote, "La race française peut être fière de ce rameau qui, dans l'Ouest canadien, fut fidèle à sa mission civilisatrice."[16] He closed his book reiterating the same theme, "Quant au grand martyr qu'il avait donné à cette cause sacrée, le peuple métis resta longtemps seul à révérer, seul à voir se dresser, à l'horizon, l'ombre de l'Emancipateur et du libérateur."[17]

In the minds of English Protestant writers, at least those close to the times about which they wrote, such as George Bryce and R.G. MacBeth, Riel's actions never had any legitimacy. The man was a demagogue, a demagogue inspired by self-interest or misled by an ambitious Roman clergy. Perhaps the Métis did have grievances; but nothing, absolutely nothing could justify the "wanton murder" of Thomas Scott[18] or give legitimacy to Riel's governments, either in Manitoba or Saskatchewan. Indeed, the general impression the reader gets from MacBeth is one of a simple people misled by Riel and the Roman Church. The only thing to be said for Riel was that he was a "madman." His defeat, even his execution, were necessary for the development and progress of the country. Later writers were inclined to be less outspoken. This was true of Schofield in Manitoba, Black in Saskatchewan[19] and George Wrong and Chester Martin in Ontario. The latter, writing in *Canada and its Provinces*[20] gives a calm, well-written and, by his own standards, balanced account of both the Red River and North Saskatchewan troubles. A.R.M. Lower, one of Canada's most perceptive as well as outspoken historians, put his views in these words when dealing with Riel's trial and execution: "Riel in 1885 symbolized to Frenchmen the blood lust of Orangeism, its determination to take away from French Catholics all their rights, to oppress and destroy them. The execution took on a highly representative character; a whole people was on trial. It was taken as a direct challenge to the whole French race, just as Scott's execution had been a challenge to Protestantism. Wherever justice lay, from the deed the curse descended once more upon Canada, the curse of division and of racialism."[21]

Carefully avoiding the extremism and special pleading of a de Trémaudan or a MacBeth, but still within the framework of the now traditional thesis of the Riel troubles as a western expression of the stresses and strains of Canadian binationalism and biculturalism, was a doctoral dissertation written by J.A. Jonasson at the University of California. This thoroughly professional piece of work, however, failed to find a publisher, either in Canada or in the United States. All that appeared in print was an article published by the *Pacific Historical Review* in 1934.[22] This essay gave an excellent academic summary of what was, by this time, the well-accepted interpretation of Riel. The American historian, Mason Wade, who carefully avoided identifying himself with either side in the Canadian controversy, followed the traditional line of thought. In his *French Canadian Outlook*, he saw French Canadian history as enshrining Riel as a martyr of French and Catholic culture in Canada. Wade followed the same interpretive approach to Riel in his voluminous work, *The French Canadians 1760 - 1945*, published in Toronto several years later.[23]

5

By the 1930s, however, a new face began to emerge on Louis Riel. This was the one I saw as I pursued my doctoral studies at Oxford University. Having, as a small boy in southern Alberta, read Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking tales and Francis Parkman's *Oregon Trail*, and listened to stories about Indians, half-breeds and mounted policemen, I was familiar at least with the outlines of western Canadian history before I ever went to university. And it was not a hostile or critical picture that emerged in my mind. My father was disposed to regard the Indians with a sympathetic eye, and although my mother — she too had moved to the West from Ontario in the late years of the nineteenth century, spending some time in Fort Macleod and in Lethbridge — was afraid of Indians (after all, the fires had been extinguished only a few years earlier at Wounded Knee) she too was not hostile. How could I help but be interested when Indians drove each day in front of our house in Calgary on their way from Sarcee to the city, and when as a small boy, I had a chance to meet not only Father Lacombe, but Colonel James Walker, who made the march with the Mounted Police in 1873, and others, including Robert Armstrong to whom Riel surrendered on 16 May 1885, and William Cameron, who had narrowly escaped death at Frog Lake.

Even so, the most decisive influence shaping my view of Riel came from my experience at Oxford. I included British colonial policy among my undergraduate studies, and read widely about Native problems in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. When I went on to graduate work, Dr. Vincent Harlow, the Rhodes House Librarian, encouraged me to take a look at Riel. And when I gained permission to work in the Hudson's Bay Company archives, the subject of my thesis was settled. But there was more to it than that. My undergraduate reading had prompted an interest in the problems arising out of the cultural conflict between Native peoples and European immigrants during the British colonial period. And this interest was further stimulated by Dr. E.P. Morrell, a New Zealander, then Beit Lecturer in Colonial History at Oxford, who suggested to me the possibility of a parallel between the Indians in Canada and the Maoris of his own country. In consequence, when I wrote my doctoral thesis, this idea of cultural conflict was uppermost in my mind. The traditional French-English, Catholic-Protestant approach to western Canadian history appeared to me to be purely coincidental. Instead, I saw the Riel issues as a Canadian example of a far wider problem which was, in brief, the inevitable clash arising out of the expansion of an industrialized civilization into regions inhabited by peoples whose culture-pattern was still based upon a hunting or rudimentary agricultural economy. In every instance the more primitive people were compelled to pay a heavy price for the alleged "benefits" of "civilization."

Later I found myself, for some reason or other, labelled as a "frontier" historian by some of my contemporaries.[24] I know that A.L. Burt, my professor at the University of Alberta in the nineteen twenties, was a strong supporter of Turner's "frontier thesis"; but, I believe the key to my interpretation of Riel is to be found in my Oxford rather than in my Alberta experience. This surely must be apparent to anyone who takes the trouble to read two articles over my signature written in 1940 and in 1947.[25]

I have always tended to see Turner's thesis simply as a scholarly effort to bolster American nationalism by attributing democracy, not to the fertilization of American political thinking by eighteenth century European writers, but to purely indigenous influences, in particular, to the "open frontier, the hither edge of free land." Turner's interpretation of American history was and still is, to my mind, an oversimplification, an effort, not wholly successful, to isolate the United States from the general course of civilization; a kind of political parthenogenesis.

My Oxford doctoral thesis was published by Longmans, Green, in London, England, in 1936, under the title of *The Birth of Western Canada*. It was well reviewed. *John O'London* even made it "the book of the week."[26] Some British people even purchased copies. But in Canada the book was largely ignored, despite a moderately favourable review in the *Canadian Historical Review* by R.O. MacFarlane.[27]

Am I presumptuous in claiming to have pointed the way to a new interpretation of Riel and the Métis risings? I can point out that my "cultural-conflict" theory was adopted by the French ethnologist-historian, Marcel Giraud. Giraud was familiar with my book and with A.S. Morton's *History of the Canadian West* (1936).[28] He had studied the Canadian historical scene in depth, and was free, during the years of World War II, to put his researches on paper and to secure publication in 1945 by the Institut d'Ethnologie de l'Université de Paris. Giraud adopted my cultural-conflict thesis interpretation and added the strength of his vast researches to it. However, neither *The Birth of Western Canada*, *Le Métis Canadien* nor *The History of the Canadian West* made much impact upon the general book-buying, or even book-reading public. To interpret Riel as the defender of a Native culture rather than as a rebel against constituted authority was to imply, on my part, a degree of sympathy unacceptable at that time to many Canadians. I was dismayed but not discouraged. The revival of interest in Riel in the middle fifties, which led to the re-publication of *The Birth of Western Canada*, by the University of Toronto Press in 1960, prompted me to do what I had long wanted, to write a full-dress biography of Louis Riel. For several years, I assumed that the late William Morton of the University of Manitoba, who had already published his *History of Manitoba* and a lengthy introduction to the *Alexander Begg Journal*,[29] would probably undertake that task. Finally, when the late Lorne Pierce of the Ryerson Press asked me to write the biography, I put the question fairly to Professor Morton. He replied that he had taken it for granted that I would do it. And so I did. The book was published in 1963 and met with a good response.[30] However, after the Ryerson Press was taken over by the American firm of McGraw-Hill, I ceased to be one of their favoured authors.

There was a step-up of Canadian interest in Riel during the post-World War II years, partly, I think, because of his discovery by the Americans. In 1952, Riel emerged from the pens of Kinsey Howard and Bernard de Voto as "the American primitive," the hero, the forlorn hope, the right stuff.[31] There were no grey tones here, no shades of meaning. It was all white and black; liberty and death; gallantry and cowardice; good and evil; freedom and oppression. Everything required for a popular consumption. Charles Dickens used the theme of heroic self-sacrifice in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Do we see Louis Riel as a Sydney Carton? Of course the academic historian does not, in all conscience, attempt to match this; even though he knows that his reading public likes its history simple and direct, with good guys and bad guys clearly delineated. What does it matter if historical truth, or what passes for historical truth, is touched up a bit? Photographers do it all the time. A portrait is all the more pleasing if the warts are removed. The old western movies may not have portrayed accurate history, but they followed a sure-fire box-office formula. In academic terms, we could sum up the formula as "romantic primitivism."

It was this "romantic primitivism" that appealed to the imaginative writers in Canada. The most significant of these was the Irish Canadian playwright, John Coulter, whose two-part play *Louis Riel* is a dramatic portrayal of a man trying to preserve the way of life of a minority against overwhelming odds. Riel, according to Coulter, was "The most theatrical character in Canadian history, and probably in American history as well. He rides the political conscience of the nation after nearly three-quarters of a century, and is manifestly on his way to becoming the tragic hero at the heart of the Canadian myth."[32] Played first in Toronto in 1950 by the New Play Society, Coulter's *Riel* was broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) with Bruno Gerussi playing the role of Louis Riel — a far better production incidentally, than the CBC's fictional effort in 1979. The producer, in this latter instance, would have done better had he repeated the original Coulter production or at least given his viewers something that would have adhered more accurately to historical and geographical truth.[33]

Of much less significance as a work of dramatic art than Coulter's was a play written by Charles Bayer and E. Parage. The piece was published originally in Montréal in 1886 and re-published at St. Boniface in 1984. It has not been produced and has little to commend it historically or theatrically. Also lacking both literary or historical merit, other than as evidence of the interest aroused by the execution of Riel, are Elzéar Paquin's *Riel, tragédie en quatre actes* (Montréal, 1886), and F.G. Walsh's *The Trial of Louis Riel*, published in Fargo, North Dakota, in 1965. More satisfying is Mavor Moore's libretto for the Harry Somers opera, *Riel*, produced in the O'Keefe Centre in Toronto in 1967. Bernard Turgeon played the lead role. A television version of Somers's opera was later produced making this magnificent production heard elsewhere in Canada and in Europe.

In the field of historical fiction, here are a few random examples: J.E. Collins's *Annette the Métis Spy: A Heroine of the N.W. Rebellion* (Toronto, 1886); Joseph Emile Poirier's *La Tempète sur le Fleuve* (Paris, 1931); Edward McCourt's *Buckskin Brigadier* (Toronto, 1955); and R.D. Symon's *Still the Wind Blows* (Saskatoon, 1971). None of these works has, however, the strong emphasis on Riel to be found in Rudy Wiebe's *The Scorched Earth People* (Toronto, 1977). Making allowances for his fictional projection of Gabriel Dumont into the Red River story and his idealization of Riel, Wiebe is unquestionably the most skillful novelist to address himself to the problems posed by the Métis risings in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Even a cursory glance at this book will reveal the mighty gap that exists between Collins's *The Story of Riel, the Rebel Chief* and Wiebe's *The Scorched Earth People*. More people will read Wiebe, despite or perhaps because of his romantic liberalism, than are likely to read the more complicated, professional studies by academic historians.

6

Meanwhile, however, Riel has taken on a new face. Today he appears to some historians and would-be historians alike, not as a French Catholic leader, nor as the representative leader of a cultural minority, nor as a romantic hero, but as the first of a long line of prairie political patriots, extending from John Norquay to Peter Lougheed, seeking to give coherence to western regional identity.[34] Stretching their imaginations a little farther, some westerners profess to see Riel as the father-founder of western separatism; not just the voice of the land-robbed Métis and Indians, but the voice of every prairie farmer and prairie oil investor resenting the economic domination, real or imaginary, of those grasping, federal politicians located somewhere in "Eastern Canada." Sir John A. Macdonald, now long in his grave, has been forgotten as the object of western reproach; his place has been taken by Pierre Trudeau.

The face of Louis Riel, the progenitor of western radicalism, is not without its appeal to historians. After all, are not radicals and revolutionaries the stuff to give liveliness to political history? The late Professor William Morton had caught a dim glimpse of this new face of Riel when he wrote his introduction to *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal*. Professor Douglas Owram made this point in his paper on "The Myth of Louis Riel," in the *Canadian Historical Review* in September 1982.[35] And it is a legitimate point. A Manitoba Anglophone, Morton was inclined towards a mild sympathy with the Métis as westerners, suggesting that Riel's basic aim had been to obtain a position for the Métis "similar to that which the French of Quebec had won for themselves in Canada." As a Manitoban, of rural origin, Morton was also inclined towards a suspicion of Ottawa and federal politicians. He did not see Riel as the precursor of Manitoba's New Democratic Party leader, Howard Pawley, but he did see him as resembling Alberta's evangelistic Social Credit founder, William Aberhart. Both, he wrote, "were prairie politicians."[36]

Morton, even if he did react in typical western fashion to the arrogance of Upper Canadians and try to see in Riel a western Canadian political prototype, was too cerebral and too conservative to share Howard Adams's opinions about Riel. A Métis and a great-grandson of Maxime Lepine, one of Riel's supporters both in 1869-70 and in 1885, Adams, in his *Prison of Grass*, runs the gamut of tendentious phraseology, accusing the Canadian government of "racism"; declaring that parliament's action in 1874 in expelling Riel from the House of Commons "leads me to wonder whether the electoral system will ever work for the Indians and Métis."[37] Adams presents a more interesting speculation when he describes the events in the Saskatchewan valley in 1884-85 as the "culmination of a complex struggle that had arisen over the previous two decades between the people of the Northwest and the industrial rulers of Ottawa." Adams's book is a passionate work; scholarly, I suppose, within the framework of his political radicalism. The people of the North-West, the farmers, settlers, workers, white, Indian and Métis alike, were, according to

Adams, doing no more than struggling for economic and land reforms and responsible government. Riel, he writes, was "murdered ... on the colonizers' scaffold."[38] This kind of thesis fits neatly into the Marxist stereotype. Adams sees the Riel movement of 1884-85 as a secessionist movement and argues that it was federal policy deliberately to allow the situation to degenerate to the point at which troops could justifiably be sent to western Canada to subdue the Indians and the Métis by force of arms. According to Adams, Father André, Charles Nolin and Philippe Garnot were *agents provocateurs*; the Métis and Indian fighters were "champions of freedom and democracy"; and those who suffered death were "uncomparable heroes."

Another popular, politically-minded if not politically active writer like Adams, who works over the same left-wing themes, is Peter Charlebois. His *The Life of Louis Riel*, however, lacks Adams's liveliness, and his restrained approach excites little in the way of strong support. Charlebois believes that the mistakes of the Riel story are still being repeated in the Northwest Territories and argues that unless another Riel appears on the horizon, the Indians and the Métis of the North will become "beggars in their own homeland."[39] Charlebois and Adams, if nothing else, have helped to make Louis Riel into a relevant figure in the eyes of those who would never have become interested in his career had they seen him only as a protagonist of French language rights, as a Native cultural leader, as just another prairie politician. Political parties of every stripe and hue must inevitably establish their own calendar of saints and martyrs, as well as sinners. But, to me, it remains an oddity to see Riel, the man who contested elections as a Conservative and who envisioned a theocratic state for western Canada, so readily welcomed to the ranks of left-wing Socialists.

Is it an error to try to read modern secularist politics back into the events of the North-West Rebellion? Is there justification for those communists who used to meet annually — and may still do for all I know — at Riel's grave implying they and Riel emerged from the same political mould? To wish to establish roots in the past and thereby gain respectability, is understandable, but that does not make it commendable. To ask me to believe that there is an intellectual affinity between Riel, Lepine, Dumont with Engels, Marx or Lenin is to ask me to stretch my imagination beyond the breaking point, to accept political clichés as revealed truth. Quite frankly, I am more inclined towards the fourth visage of Riel, that is Riel the millenarian, the man who believed change would come as a matter of divine revelation, by a holy miracle.

7

Radicalism is not limited to politics. Throughout history, there have been groups of people, shepherds, bandits, Robin Hoods as it were, members of religious sects who usually expressed their aspirations in cults and rituals, but also at times in acts of violence.[40] All of these groups had one thing in common, namely a deep-seated religious conviction that, with God's help, they could remake the world. How and when was usually unclear. Seldom did they ever have a definite programme of action, a positive time-table for the transfer of power. They believed that God was on their side. With His aid they would attain the millenium. Some such movements still exist. They are usually composed of impractical people, unrealistic, utopian, who speak and think in terms apocalyptic. Does this pattern fit Riel? It follows, therefore, that we must look more closely at Riel, the man with a sense of divine mission; the man who saw a new heaven and a new earth on the North American continent; the man who talked of a reformed Papacy in the New World; the man who proclaimed his hope the western plains would be peopled by the oppressed thousands of Europe. This new and currently popular visage of Riel is that of Riel the Millenarian, the Prophet who spoke the language of apocalyptic religion.

That Riel held strange views and held them strongly was well known to his contemporaries. And has been to historians. Indeed that is why many people have argued that he was insane. When I wrote my biography of Riel, I was inclined to see him as "unstable," but I could not bring myself to use the word "insane." I read many of Riel's prophecies, prayers, supplications, letters. I regarded his actions as irrational; but I did not, could not say positively, "this man is insane."[41] And for my indecision I was roundly accused of lack of decisiveness by those critics who like positive assessments. As if this were always easy or always possible. The fact was that I harboured a certain sympathy for the Court, bound as it was, by the McNaghten Rules, a certain sympathy for the physicians, doctors Lavell, Valade and Jukes, who examined Riel. And not least, for the convicted man himself.[42]

My studies at Oxford had not pointed me in the direction of millenarianism, as the explanation of the Riel risings of 1869 and 1885; but those of Gilles Martel, studying for the priesthood, did give him a new standpoint from which to look at Riel. He saw Judeo-Christian messianism as one of the main features of the historical phenomenon of millenarianism, and concluded Riel's strong religious upbringing and his clerical schooling in Montréal at the hands of the Sulpicians may well have left the young Métis open to the influence of messianic theories. Martel, therefore, undertook to trace the development of Riel's messianic ideas.[43] The first phase covered the years 1870 to 1875. These were the years when Riel went into hiding to escape his suspected assassins; when he attempted to enter the field of federal politics and was defeated; when he was banished from Canada by parliamentary edict. In 1875 he experienced his first vision, while in Washington, and became convinced that God had singled him out for a special mission to the Métis people. The second phase covered the years 1875 to 1878, the years Riel spent in the mental hospitals of St. Jean de Dieu in Montréal and Beauport in Québec. During these years Riel saw himself as the "Prophet of the New World" in communication with God Himself. He envisioned the Old World as suffering under the domination of heretical and heathen nations. This tired Old World was nearing collapse. The third phase, 1878 to 1884, saw the development of Riel's concept of the Métis as God's Chosen People and the establishment of the Kingdom of God in North America. The Papacy would leave a corrupt Rome and move to Montréal and later to St. Vital in Manitoba. The last phase, 1884 to 1885, saw the expansion of Riel's concept of North America as a continent filled with peoples of various nations who, while retaining the memories of their origin, would, however, become assimilated by the Métis, if necessary by introducing polygamous marriages. Unity in diversity. The Indians Riel regarded as of Hebrew origin, "du plus pur sang d'Abraham."[44] Presumably they were the lost ten tribes of Israel. The theory of the Hebraic origin of the Indians was suggested in the Book of Mormon.

Professor Thomas Flanagan of the University of Calgary subsequently joined forces with Martel. In an analysis of Riel's thought in his *The Diaries of Louis Riel* and *Louis "David" Riel: Prophet of the New World*,[45] Flanagan expanded on Martel's work and, in so doing, revealed Riel as the visionary, the prophet in arms, the priest stretching forth his arms to the millenium. Flanagan discards the familiar symbols and slogans attached to Riel by earlier historians, martyr, murderer, leader, radical, and replaces them with new ones. New in the sense of their application to the western Canadian scene. But old in the sense that they derive from earlier European, even African, examples.[46] Flanagan sees the Riel movements as much religious as political in inspiration; as one more example of a pattern of social behaviour deriving from the past history of millenarianism and revealing recognizable similarities. Another example of the fact that historians, like history itself, are part of a recurring intellectual kaleidoscope?

If I cannot go the full course with Flanagan, it is because, while accepting the mental agility of Louis Riel, I am still a little suspicious of the mental stability of prophets proclaiming the imminence of the egalitarian millenium. Perhaps, too, I remain puzzled by the ambiguities of motive which seem to attend so many of Riel's actions. Sometimes I speculate on what might have been the outcome of a meeting between the "Young Politician" Riel and the wily "Old Chieftain" Macdonald. Of one thing only am I certain. That is, the impossibility of understanding the history of Canada during the last hundred years without a thorough study of the personalities, thoughts and actions of both these men.

8

There you have the four faces of Riel — Riel, the defender of French language and religious rights; Riel, the half-breed patriot; Riel, the first western Canadian leader; Riel, the prophet and visionary. Which is the true face? For each Canadian, the true face of Riel is the one he or she recognizes. Is it not like the old tale of the blind men describing the elephant by that particular portion of the animal each happened to touch? Perhaps we historians are the blind men. We know Riel only from the sources we consult. Perhaps each one of us is right. Again, perhaps Riel is a composite of everything we discover in our sources.

Following his execution, the ghost of Riel returned to haunt the political platforms in Québec and Ontario for many years. Today, Riel's ghost still haunts our poets, playwrights, air waves and universities. He has become a Canadian legend, if not the Canadian legend. He is our Hamlet, the personification of the great themes of our human history. Mavor Moore, the librettist of Harry Somers's opera, put it this way in a recent contribution to the *Globe and Mail*: "The young idealist, driven mad by constant betrayal at the hands of cynical realists ... The thinker paralysed by thinking about what action to take. The half-breed, the member of the 'society of neithers,' ... The lunatic who is framed by an unjust 'sane' society. The warrior entering battle with a cross ... in his hand, instead of a gun ... The leader of a small victimized group that stands in the way of the majority. The petty tyrant given comeuppance by a bigger one. The God-intoxicated human who tries to play God."[47] These are themes basic to the political and human drama of the Riel story. And they are all universal themes. Not just Canadian themes. They apply to Riel's era and to our own. They are timeless. Just as Riel is timeless. He is the patriotic myth of Canada: the haunting disquietude of our history.

Phantasmagoria! The ever-changing scene. In our efforts to reconcile the past with the present, do we reveal the truth or create more illusions? At least the next generation of students and historians will have the advantage of ready access to all of Riel's writings still extant. The Riel Project, started in 1978, by the University of Alberta, and comprising Professor Raymond Huel (University of Lethbridge), Gilles Martel (Université de Sherbrooke), Glen Campbell (University of Calgary), Thomas Flanagan (University of Calgary), under my direction as General Editor — and including Dr. Claude Rocan as co-ordinator — has finally completed its work. The result is the publication by the University of Alberta of five volumes entitled, *The Complete Writings of Louis Riel*. These volumes do not impose any one particular point of view upon the reader. The editors envisioned their task as one of ensuring the accuracy of each item, and the widest possible coverage of the subject by publishing all of Riel's writings, even those in draft form. The editors also limited their introductions to explaining how the project was carried out, and to discussing some of the problems of identification. The Riel Project is not, therefore, an academic effort to exorcise the haunting phantom of Riel. We simply hope that our publications will enable historians, artists, poets and novelists to make up their own minds about the visage of Riel that is most recognizable to him or her.

As far as I am concerned personally, the paper I have read to you tonight is my last statement on Louis Riel. Hence the title of my address. After fifty years of working on Riel's life and thoughts, off and on, it is time that I devoted my days to other Canadian historical topics. I leave any further analysis of the Métis leader to others.

> La patrie est la plus importante de toutes les choses de la terre,
> et, de plus, elle est sainte par les ancêtres qui la transmettent.
> (Louis Riel)

NOTES

1 Guillaume Charette, *L'Espace de Louis Goulet* (Winnipeg: Editions Bois-Brûlés, 1976), 137.

2 Winnipeg and Regina.

3 Rudy Wiebe, *My Lovely Enemy* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 3.

4 See IX and X of President Wilson's "Fourteen Points," outlined in his speech to Congress, 8 January 1918. See *Readings in the History*

of Modern Europe, Department of Social Sciences, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., 1959.

5 The shedding of imperial ties came more readily to the former colonies and dominions than to the imperial powers themselves. The latter could not easily forget that they had, at one time, shaped history and directed the course of civilization. Frenchmen, Englishmen, Americans and Russians are still inclined, each in their own way, to see their nation as bearing the light of the world to come.

6 Over 3,000 treaty Indians enlisted during World War II. It is impossible to determine how many Métis served in the Canadian Armed Forces. One Indian, Oliver Martin, a veteran of World War I, became a brigadier commanding the 13th Brigade. Among the junior officers, Lieutenants Greyeyes and Victor Moore of Saskatchewan were among the best known. I am grateful to Mr. Fred Gaffen of the Canadian War Museum for this information.

7 H.E. Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing* (New York: Dover, 1962), 296. Barnes quotes from Francis Bacon's *De Augmentis*.

8 These quotations from *The Globe* and *La Minerve* are taken from R.E. Lamb *Thunder in the North – Conflict over the Riel Risings, 1870–1885* (New York: Pageant Press, 1957), 81, 82, 75, 101.

9 Ibid., 185, 198, 209, 202.

10 Henri d'Arles, *Louis Fréchette* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1924), 69. The author wrote "Le genre épique demande un recul dans le temps et dans l'espace. Il faut laisser aux événements le loisir de prendre la perspective nécessaire. Pour cette raison, et pour d'autres encore, son *Gibet de Riel* et son *Dernier Martyr* n'auraient pas dû trouver leur place dans cette oeuvre."

11 *The Story of Louis Riel, the Rebel Chief* (Toronto: J.S. Robertson & Bros., 1885). The author's name is not given but the book is generally attributed to Joseph Edmund Collins (1855–1892) who also wrote *Annette the Métis Spy: A Heroine of the N.W. Rebellion* (Toronto: Rose Publishing Co., 1886). See R.E. Watters, *A Checklist of Canadian Literature and Background Materials, 1628 – 1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972). The quotations are to be found on pp. 24, 38, 42, 65, 144, 47, 48, 131. In view of recent writings about Riel, it is interesting to note that Collins compared Riel with Mohammed and El Madhi and "other great patrons of race and religion," 49.

12 Mrs. J.E.M. Whitney's "The Otter Grand March" was published by Lamplough in Montréal in 1885, and Annie Delaney's "Batoche Polka" was published by Nordheimer in Toronto in 1885. For other "Rebellion" music, see Alan Mills: *Canada's Story in Song*, published by Folkway Records and Service Corp., New York, and Margaret A. Macleod: "Songs of the Insurrection," *Beaver* 287 (Spring 1957): 18–23.

13 Jean Bruchesi, *Histoire du Canada pour Tous*, 2 Vols. (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1940).

14 In his *Le Français au Canada* (Paris: Delagrave, 1932), 157-59, Groulx argues that Riel fought to defend "son individualité ethnique" which he (Groulx) saw as French rather than as Métis. In his *Histoire du Canada Français* (Montréal: Fides, 1962), 4:141-42, Groulx refers to the "Affaire Riel" as a Canadian "Affaire Dreyfus," and maintained that Riel "n'expie pas seulement le crime d'avoir réclamé les droits de ses compatriotes, il expie surtout et avant tout le crime d'appartenir à notre race..."

15 Rev. A.G. Morice, *A Critical History of the Red River Insurrection after Official Documents and non-Catholic Sources* (Winnipeg: The author, 1935). This book according to Giraud (*Le Métis Canadien* Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1945, 51) although "bien documenté . . . apparait trop souvent comme un ouvrage de polémique." See also *La race métisse, étude critique en marge d'un livre récent* (Winnipeg: L'Auteur, 1938).

16 A-H. de Trémaudan, *Histoire de la Nation Métisse dans l'Ouest canadien* (Montréal: A. Lévesque, 1935), 28. Giraud wrote of this book, "C'est une apologie de l'oeuvre de L.D. Riel," 51. See also, *Riel et la naissance de Manitoba* (N.p., 1924).

17 Ibid., 376.

18 George Bryce, *A Short History of the Canadian People* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1887); R.G. MacBeth, *Making the Canadian West* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1905), and *The Romance of Western Canada* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1920). The words are MacBeth's. *Canadian West*, 81.

19 F.H. Schofield, *The Story of Manitoba*, 3 Vols. (Winnipeg: S.J. Clarke Pub. Co., 1913), and Norman F. Black, *A History of Saskatchewan* (Regina: North West Historical Company, 1913).

20 The completion of this twenty-three volume work under the general editorship of Drs. Adam Shortt and Arthur Doughty in 1913 was a major achievement on the part of Canadian historians which was not equalled by *The Canadian Centenary Series* directed by W.L. Morton and D.G. Creighton. The latter is already eighteen years behind schedule. The contributions to *Canada and its Provinces*, while spotty, are generally good. They still serve Canadian historians. Chester Martin's work was always well written and reliable; although out-of-date, it should not be ignored.

21 A.R.M. Lower, *Colony to Nation, A History of Canada* (Don Mills, Ont.: Longmans, 1964), 389.

22 J.A. Jonasson, "The Background of the Riel Rebellions," *Pacific Historical Review* 3 (1934):3.

23 Mason Wade, *The French Canadian Outlook* (New York: Viking, 1946). Peter Waite in his *Canada 1874-1896* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971) described this as "a waterbug kind of book,

skimming across the surface." Much more significant a contribution to Canadian historiography is Wade's *The French Canadians, 1760 - 1945* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955).

24 Duke Redbird, *We are Métis: A Métis View of the Development of the Canadian People* (Willowdale, Ont.: Ontario Métis and Non-status Indian Association, 1980), 4. See also Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 232.

25 G.F.G. Stanley, "Western Canada and the Frontier Thesis," *Annual Report, The Canadian Historical Association*, ed. R.G. Riddell (Toronto, 1940) and G.F.G. Stanley, "The Métis and the Conflict of Cultures in Western Canada," *The Canadian Historical Review* 28, no. 4 (December 1947).

26 See Edward Shanks in *John O'London's Weekly*, 1 August 1936.

27 *The Canadian Historical Review* 17, no. 4 (December 1936): 454–57.

28 In *Le Métis Canadien* (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1945), 4, Giraud wrote "The Birth of Western Canada, Londres - Toronto, 1936 contient l'exposé le plus sûr, le plus complet et le plus scientifique." Of Morton's book he wrote "A History of the Canadian West to 1870–71, fournit une excellente mise au point de l'insurrection de 1869–70."

29 W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957); *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869–1870* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956).

30 Some of the old attitudes were still apparent even at this late date. When the Canadian Historical Association brought out my booklet *Louis Riel: Patriot or Rebel* in 1954, the Department of Education in Ontario was the only provincial Education Department in Canada to refuse to buy any copies for the provincial schools! In 1963 Dr. Wilhelmina Gordon, reviewing my *Louis Riel* for *Echoes*, limited herself to two sentences. I quote from memory. "Dr. Stanley seems to like Riel. There were a lot of soldiers out in 1885 who didn't." A sympathetic revisionist manuscript prepared some years before World War II by W.M. Davidson of Calgary, could not find a publisher. It was finally printed in 1955, some years after Davidson's death, by his old newspaper, *The Albertan*, with a "stimulation grant" provided by his widow.

31 Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire: A Narrative of the Northwest* (New York: Morrow, 1952). Riel has fallen victim to several popularizers, whose works sometimes pass for history, such as Frank Rasky, *The Taming of the Canadian West* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967). Taming? *Mon oeil!*

32 John Coulter, *Riel a play in two parts* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1962), dust cover quoting the author. This work was followed by D.G. Gutteridge's five-part narrative poem, *Riel A Poem for Voices*,

Toronto, 1972. The work is built around two basic conflicts: the struggle between the Métis, who hold tenaciously to the land, and the Anglo-Saxon Canadians who wish to dispossess them, and the inner turmoil of a man (Riel) of two bloods and two cultures. This is a humane piece of work that sees the Riel issue in terms of the clash of cultures. Gutteridge acknowledged his debt to G.F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel* and to J.K. Howard's *Strange Empire*.

33 Truth may be stranger than fiction; certainly it is no less interesting or dramatic. An adaptation of the screen play by Roy Moore in narrative form by Janet Rosenstock and Dennis Adair deserves Donald Swainson's comment that it "Harlequinized" history. See Donald Swainson's "Rielana and the Structure of Canadian History," *Journal of Popular Culture* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1980): 295.

34 Native ancestors are to be found in the family trees of both Norquay and Lougheed. Does this give strength to the idea of classifying Riel, the Métis, as the first prairie political patriot?

35 Douglas Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," *Canadian Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (September 1982): 329. This excellent article should be read as a corrective, shall I say, to my paper.

36 W.L. Morton, "The Bias of Prairie Politics" *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 44 (1955): 57. It is interesting to note that one of the most recent publications by a Manitoba historian, Gerald Friesen, follows Morton's lead in portraying the West as a federal colony. Friesen does not refer to Riel as a prairie patriot but entitles one of his chapters "Canada's Empire," 1984.

37 Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass* (Toronto: New Press, 1975), 63.

38 Ibid., 137.

39 Peter Charlebois, *The Life of Louis Riel* (Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1975), 239.

40 See E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels, Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Praeger, 1963).

41 I was more positive when I wrote Historical Booklet No. 2 for the Canadian Historical Association in 1954, *Louis Riel: Patriot or Rebel*. But after I had spent more time studying Riel, I became less certain. That is why I avoided any positive statement in my 1963 biography about the state of Riel's mind.

42 In 1947, I talked with Walter Allison Cooke in Vancouver (the man with the bald head, with his back to the camera in the familiar photograph illustrating Riel's trial at Regina — see Stanley, *Riel*, opposite p. 338). He told me that he found the trial an exhausting emotional experience, that he felt sympathetic towards the prisoner in the dock and did not believe him to be insane. Such was the attitude of a young protestant minister who, sixty-two years later, had not changed his mind. His father's views were confirmed in a

letter from his son, retired Professor Albert C. Cooke, dated 7 February 1985.

I think it is worth recording that, quoting from memory a conversation with J.N. Greenshields, one of Riel's lawyers, the late Edward Shanks attributed to Greenshields the statement that Riel was "a religious fanatic, but very reasonable and far-seeing in particular matters." Still quoting Greenshields on Riel, Shanks continued, "His religious views were universal, though not unique. He wanted a Pope for the American continent, which lost him the support of the Church, though not that of his Catholic followers. In practical matters he was far too practical to be practical. He wanted a gradual development from the mixture of two races in the unexploited continent instead of the results produced by Western impatience to get the utmost out of the soil and the animals at once. Had the luck of the historical process been with him, he might have made a great nation out of the Métis of the North-West. It was against him, and so he is a curiosity, tucked away in the annals of the British Empire. Yet, when you think it over coolly, what he tried to do for Canada was in essence as finely constructive as many things done by men who we commonly reckon to be statesmen of genius." (See Edward Shanks, "The Rebel of the North-West," *John O'London's Weekly*, 1 August 1936, 626).

43 Gilles Martel, *Le Messianisme de Louis Riel* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1984). This book was prepared as a doctoral thesis for the University of Paris in 1976.

44 Martel, "Les Indiens dans la pensée messianique de Louis Riel," in A.S. Lussier, *Riel and the Métis: Riel Mini-Conference Papers* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Métis Federation Press, 1979), 36-38.

45 Thomas Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

46 See Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium, Revolutionary messianism in medieval and Reformation Europe and its bearing on modern totalitarian movements* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

47 Mavor Moore, "Haunted by the ghost of a rebellious upstart," *Globe and Mail*, 9 March 1985, E2.

Frontiers in Transition: Nova Scotia 1713–1763 Compared to the North–West 1869–1885

Olive P. Dickason

The piecemeal transfer of the suzerainty of Canada from the aboriginal inhabitants first to the French, then to the British, and finally to the Dominion of Canada, was a comparatively peaceful process in which Canadians take some pride. It is a pride which should not be pushed too far, however; as historians have frequently pointed out, "comparatively peaceful" is far from meaning that there was no violence, but rather that it was not a permanent characteristic of the relationship between the Amerindian and European. That statement is not beyond argument either, as it was in Canada that two of the most protracted (if not actually the longest) violent confrontations between Amerindians and Europeans in North America occurred. One of these is known well enough to be familiar to every Canadian school child: the Iroquois Wars against New France, which lasted for almost a century, 1609–1701. The other one, which was even longer, is known much less, and usually is acknowledged cursorily, if acknowledged at all, in Canadian histories: the Micmac War on land and sea against the British, c. 1613–1763.[1] It is the purpose of this paper to examine the final phase of this conflict, 1713–63, in comparison with still another confrontation, perhaps the best known of all in Canadian history, that of the Métis of the northwestern plains against the Canadian government, 1869–85,[2] and of the Plains Cree, 1885.[3]

At first glance, these confrontations might be seen as differing too widely in character — time, locale, combatants, course and nature of events — to be comparable. A second look, however, reveals that the fundamental nature of the conflicts was the same, that of Native peoples fighting an intruding power for their lands and for their right to self-determination, which they had taken for granted before the arrival of Europeans. Particular circumstances lent individuality to each contest, but did not alter the basic principles at issue. In both cases the Natives failed, and in defeat also lost their visions of themselves as political entities with power. Bereft of a sense of purpose, their cultural cohesiveness disintegrated. But, perhaps surprisingly (at least the dominant society thought so), in each instance a sense of identity remained, and after a long period of quiescence, is now burgeoning into a renewed cultural self-confidence. A contributing factor has been a world-wide change in social climate, which in Canada has been manifested through its slow acceptance of itself as a cultural mosaic. In this more tolerant social atmosphere, and encouraged by the re-thinking of the constitution occasioned by the patriation of the British North America Act, Canada's original peoples have once more raised the question of self-determination. This time the central authority is showing signs of listening; as the emotions aroused by the confrontation have faded, it has become easier — if not always easy — to face points at issue on their own merits.

Both the eastern and western conflicts spread over large geographical areas. The Micmac theatre of war ranged from the Straits of Belle Isle to Maine (and even further south if their participation in Abenaki activities were to be included). The principal scenes of action in Canada were along the east coast of Nova Scotia from the Straits of Canso to Cape Sable, and in the Bay of Fundy.[4] Fighting erupted sporadically throughout the war's long course, but with a major intensification in 1713-30, and a lesser one during the decade of the 1750s. In the case of the western Métis, the first phase of their resistance was worked out in the District of Assiniboia (mainly at Red River) in 1869-70, and the second part toward the North, in Saskatchewan River country, in 1885. It was in the latter area also that the Cree fought their battles. In the Métis resistance, the only actual fighting occurred in 1885, from 26 March to 12 May; the concurrent Cree fighting lasted about two weeks longer. The conflagrations that marked the North-West Rebellion have been aptly compared to prairie fires breaking out in widely scattered places, short, localized and intense.[5]

Both confrontations occurred during periods of extensions of sovereignty by expanding states. In the first case, overseas powers were building empires; in the second case, a fledgling nation-state was seeking to realize its "natural" boundaries. The French and English had fought over Acadia/Nova Scotia from the days of first settlement at the beginning of the seventeenth century, with the region being tossed back and forth between the two flags until it finally became British with the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). That had been most unwelcome to the Micmac and Malecite, who after a century of fighting against the British as allies of the French, found to their dismay that France had signed away their ancestral lands without consulting or even informing them. To make matters worse, the British took the stand that the Micmac's title to their lands had previously been extinguished by the French, and that in any event, the Micmac had lost their title in the conquest of Acadia. In neither case did the British see the necessity for compensation. The reaction of the Micmac was to intensify their struggle.

Similarly, but without prior involvement in colonial wars, the Red River Métis and the northwestern Plains Cree learned via rumour that their territory was being transferred from the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada. (Although the transfer did not occur until 15 July 1870, it had been planned for at least the year prior, and had been discussed well before that.) That unwelcome news was confirmed when federal surveyors appeared, unannounced, and began to work without consultation with the inhabitants. All of this was just a precursor for even bigger changes on the horizon: the building of the transcontinental railway, which would coincide with the disappearance of the bison herds upon which Métis and Plains Amerindians depended for their subsistence. In taking a stand against these turbulent changes, the Métis obtained the establishment of the province of Manitoba (1870) and a land grant for themselves of 1.4 million acres. But they did not win acceptance into the new order heralded by these events. Either selling their scrip outright, or losing their land in a tangle of double-dealing and bureaucratic red tape, groups of Manitoba Métis attempted to relocate toward the North, where they still hoped to continue their buffalo-hunting way of life. The wise among them recognized that this could be only for a limited time and on a reduced scale. Ottawa's continuing obliviousness to their petitions concerning land allotments fuelled both their worry over the disappearing bison herds and their sentiment of estrangement from the political and social establishment.[6] The second violent outbreak was a long time brewing; Ottawa, while aware of what was happening, was slow to react.

For the Plains Cree, violence was provoked by loss of the subsistence base for their traditional way of life, and the reluctance of the Canadian government to provide adequately for them during a difficult transition to a new mode of living. As the Amerindians saw it, since the white man had created the situation in the first place, it was now his responsibility to correct it. Concern over their lands and diminishing control over their own affairs, coupled with growing pressures to immediately change their lifestyle, added to the tension. Personal factors dictated that the situation would be more volatile among the Plains Cree than it would be among the Blackfoot. In the North, such Cree leaders as Mistahimaskwa (Big Bear), Minahikosis (Little Pine), Kamiyistowesit (Beardy), and Papewes (Lucky Man) openly defied Ottawa, claiming not only that Treaty Six was inadequate, but also that in requiring the Cree to submit to Canadian law, it deprived them of their autonomy; in the South, at Qu'Appelle, similar sentiments in regard to Treaty Four were expressed by Payepot (Piapot).[7] To the Southwest, the Blackfoot were no better satisfied with Treaty Seven, but such sentiments were tempered by the comparatively realistic attitude of the North West Mounted Police: when the food crisis had deepened, particularly in the Cypress Hills where large numbers of plains people had congregated during the late 1870s in pursuit of the last of the bison in Canada, North West Mounted Police officers had distributed rations on their own initiative. It was a move which had not pleased Indian Affairs officials, who were using rations as a means of forcing the reluctant plainsmen onto reserves and into farming. Mutual antipathy between Blackfoot and Cree may also have been a factor; most important of all was the assessment of Isapo-muxika (Crowfoot) and other chiefs, who realized that an uprising, far from solving the problem, would probably just compound it. In the Micmac War also, individual chiefs had on occasion exercised their initiative to keep out of the conflict. When the Micmac raided Canso in 1720, causing considerable damage, the Malecite of St. John River, perhaps fearing reprisals, hastened to disassociate themselves from the incident.[8]

The origins of Micmac hostility toward the British ante-dated serious concerns about land. As allies of the French, first of all as hunters for marine mammals and in the fur trade, and later as guerrillas, the Micmac became embroiled in French-English colonial rivalries. During the seventeenth century, they fought the English for reasons that fitted into their traditional patterns of warfare: because they were the enemies of their allies (the French), but also in retaliation against English depredations, such as slave raids. When the English attacked the French at Saint-Sauveur in 1613 (near Ellsworth, Maine), the Micmac offered aid to the survivors who returned to Port Royal:

> Ces bons sauvages ayants ouy nostre désastre s'en vindrent à nous et nous offroyent leur possible, promettants de nous alimenter durant l'hyver et monstrants une grande compassion.[9]

By that time, the Micmac had already been partners with the French in their sea-hunting and fur-trade enterprises for more than half a century. The English slave-raided sporadically throughout this period; one of the more celebrated instances occurred in 1676, when they captured Micmac from Machias and Cape Sable, and sold them into slavery in the Azores.[10] Micmac sea raids against the English had been under way since at least 1645.[11] To the South, the Abenaki War, also fought on both land and sea, had broken out earlier as a consequence of the almost immediate confrontation over property rights which had developed upon the arrival of the English, intent upon establishing agricultural settlements. They set about doing this in lands where the Abenaki already had substantial farming communities lining such rivers as the Penobscot, Kennebec, and the middle and upper Connecticut in regions known as "Norumbega" and "Mawooshen."[12]

By the time France signed Acadia over to Britain in the Treaty of Utrecht, the Micmac had become only too well aware that the control of the lands they considered to be theirs was at stake in the English-French disputes. Their concern deepened into consternation when they learned that the Treaty had failed to do so much as mention either themselves or any of the other Amerindian peoples whose territories had been transferred under its terms.[13]

The Micmac reacted by reaffirming their sovereignty over Megumaage, as they called their country. The French, they claimed, had been accepted as allies, and as such had never been accorded more than the use of their lands; the French king was their "father" because he had sent missionaries to teach them their new religion (by the end of the seventeenth century, the French had declared all the Micmac to be converted to Christianity). They accorded to the French monarch no more obedience than they did to their own leaders, whose authority was limited to the powers of persuasion and the influence of generosity. They were remaining as allies of the French, despite the presence of the British, and would continue to wage war or make peace as they willed. They would not tolerate any new English establishments along the Acadian coast, and English ships would come into those waters at their peril.[14]

The Micmac were as good as their word, pitching into the fray on both land and sea with a "férocité inutile" which dismayed the French even as they delighted in the discomfiture of their enemies.[15] It was a delicate situation, considering that France and Britain were technically at peace. The British, for their part, had no doubts as to the cause of Micmac hostility: "All the Indians that border upon the Sea Coast, by the Instigation of the French have lately Robbed & Plundered our Sloops & fallen upon our Fishing Vessels," which they assaulted, burned and destroyed.[16] The British had difficulty in believing that the Natives, even while acting in cooperation with the French, were still primarily motivated by their own self-interest.

The periods of greatest activity in the Micmac sea campaign included the English-Amerindian War (also known as Dummer's War) of 1722-25, and the French and Indian War (1752-63; the corresponding European conflict with which it became associated is the Seven Years' War, which began in 1756). Official correspondence from Louisbourg refers to well over one hundred marine captures by Amerindians during the period 1713-60, and this does not appear to be complete. A peak of Amerindian maritime activity was reached in 1722, when the French reported the taking of twenty to twenty-five vessels in the Bay of Fundy and off the coasts of Acadia. According to English accounts, eighteen "trading vessels" were taken that year in the Bay of Fundy, and another eighteen between Cape Sable and Canso.[17]

When in 1749, the British founded Halifax on favourite hunting territory without consultation with them, the Micmac decided to meet the British on their own terms, and issued a formal declaration of war in the European manner. Written in Micmac, it protested their dispossession of their lands and stated their intention to defend them. They were also reacting to a rumour that the English intended to destroy the Natives.[18] Raids on both land and sea were stepped up, with outlying homesteads being particularly vulnerable. One of the more celebrated instances of this involved the Paysant family who had settled near Lunenberg, in which the father, Louis, was killed, and his pregnant wife, Marie, and four children were taken captive. Such raids reached the point where one settlement had to be temporarily abandoned; Governor Edward Cornwallis asked that arms be provided for the colonists, as "at present above ten thousand people are awed by two hundred savages."[19]

At sea, Micmac and Malecite depredations seriously hampered fishing fleets and coastal shipping; the English reacted by hanging the raiders as pirates, when they could catch them.[20] Amerindians, far from being daunted, became even more daring in their attacks: in 1727, about thirty took a seventy-ton schooner at Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, and sailed it to Bras d'Or Lake, Cape Breton Island. The French arranged for the owner in Boston to buy it back, covering up their complicity in the affair while making sure that their Amerindian allies were rewarded.[21]

The terror that was spread by these raids is illustrated by an incident that occurred off Ile St-Jean in 1729. The Micmac capture and burning of a single vessel caused eighty others to return to Canso, even though a nearby French vessel was able to intervene and save the lives of the crew. A year later, English fishing vessels were reported still to be avoiding the area.[22]

Although these raids, particularly those at sea, continued until the conclusion of peace between the British and the Micmac and their allies, 25 June 1761, the Amerindians had long been aware that no matter how successfully they fought, the tide of war was going against them. The crushing defeat of the Abenaki in 1724, leading to the Treaty of Boston the following year, had been a psychological turning point for the Micmac and Malecite, even though few of them had been directly involved. From 1726 almost until the final peace of 1761, one band after another of Micmac and Malecite signed ratifications of the Boston agreement. But the major turning point was in 1752, when a leading Micmac chief, Jean-Baptiste Cope, along with three other chiefs, signed at Halifax. This treaty was more than a ratification of the 1725 agreement, as by its terms the British agreed to distribute rations every six months, and other goods once a year. This presaged the annual payments so characteristic of the numbered treaties of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Ontario, the Prairie Provinces, and the North-West Territories. Although the 1752 treaty appears to have been a major British effort to come to terms with the Micmac, it was not successful in stopping the sea raids. Not only that, but the treaty itself was soon broken as an incident in an English fort set off another series of reprisals and counter-reprisals between Micmac and English.[23]

The peace of 1761, while it terminated overt hostilities between Micmac and settlers, did not immediately relax the tensions that had been engendered by a century and a half of warfare. At first, there was the fear of a possible return of the French, a fear which almost became hysteria with the French investment of St. John's, Newfoundland, during the summer of 1762. Trying as this situation was for the settlers, it was probably worse for the Micmac, who had been thrown back upon their own resources at a time when their traditional subsistence bases had been depleted to the point of disappearance. Starving, some of them went in search of new hunting grounds, crossing Cabot Strait to Newfoundland. They were not welcomed by the officials of the island colony, any more than they were welcomed by the French on the only foothold France had left in North America, the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. Officials on those islands were instructed not to receive the Micmac as that "would only be disagreeable to the English, and expensive and useless to the French."[24]

The question of land remained a troublesome one, as officials stood firm in their position that aboriginal title had been extinguished by the French, and there was no need for the British to repeat the process. An attempt to reserve coastal lands for the sea-going Micmac did not survive the 1762 scare; in the future, any lands that would be set aside for them would be in the interior, thereby effectively cutting the Micmac off from their traditional way of life, which had alternated between sea and forest as the season and availability of game had dictated. Those lands which the Micmac were allowed to keep were provided by legislative act, not by treaty. Ironically, the long fight of the Micmacs and Malecite was one of the factors leading to the Proclamation of 1763, which prepared the way for peaceful settlement on the western frontier (Ontario, at that period).

Canada's move to acquire the North-West Territories without taking into account the wishes of the inhabitants brought to a head a long-standing unease, which had first manifested itself during the establishment of the Selkirk colony at Red River in 1811-12. In the confrontations which had followed that event, the Métis had become unhappily aware of the precariousness of their legal position as it was interpreted in Ottawa and London. As early as 1845, a group of Métis had petitioned the governor of Assiniboia, Alexander Christie, for a clarification of their status and rights. At that time they had argued against the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly, claiming that it had led "to the utter impoverishment, if not the ruin of the natives." They had also argued for special rights by reason of their Amerindian descent. These arguments had been dismissed by Christie, who had taken the position that the Métis had no more nor no fewer rights than those enjoyed by all British subjects.[25] In 1847, they had taken their petition to the British Colonial Office through the intercession of a London lawyer, Alexander K. Isbister, a mixed-blood who had been born in Cumberland House in the Canadian Northwest and educated in England. The petition, which had accumulated almost a thousand signatures, asked that the Hudson's Bay Company charter be declared invalid, and that the Canadian Northwest be thrown open to settlement as a British colony. British authorities did not see the Northwest as being suitable for settlement, and furthermore, while not unanimously in favour of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly, they viewed its disadvantages as the least of any immediately apparent in alternatives. The petitioners had the right to take their case to the Privy Council, but they had run out of resources. By 1850, the suit was dropped. Back at Red River, the Métis were continuing their campaign on another level: they were seeking greater participation in the government of the settlement.

As a series of social scandals expressed the mounting political tensions at Red River, the English-language Métis held a meeting to demand that if Canada was going to pay anyone for the acquisition of the Northwest, it should be the Amerindians and Métis, not the Hudson's Bay Company. The events which led up to the establishment of the two Métis Provisional Governments in 1869-70 and eventually that of Manitoba as a Canadian province in 1870, while dramatic, fell short of outright violence. The most violent aspect of this attempt of the Métis to carve for themselves a recognized place in the Dominion occurred after the arrival of the Canadian expeditionary force under Colonel Garnet Wolseley in 1871. In effect, the Métis were persecuted, in at least one case to the point of death. As settlers moved in from Ontario, instead of from Québec, the Métis were made to feel strangers in their own land, and what has been labelled by some historians as "the first dispersal" began.

Still following the bison-hunting way of life despite the growing diminution of the herds, Red River Métis moved north and west, some of them settling on the South Saskatchewan, below Prince Albert, and others moving further west until they finally settled in Alberta, particularly in the region of St. Albert, outside of Edmonton. It would be the Saskatchewan settlements, collectively known as the South Branch or sometimes by the name of the mission, St. Laurent, that would become the centre for the second and violent confrontation with Canada in 1885.

For their part the Cree, in signing Treaty Six (1876), had won, through hard negotiation on the part of such leaders as Pitikwahanipiwiyin (Poundmaker), the government's concession that it would provide rations in times of famine. That time was now, the Cree argued, as by 1885 there had been a succession of bad crops, and in any event the Cree had not yet had time to adapt to this new way of life. The government, confident in its expectation that the Cree could make this dramatic switch in two or three years, was also in a period of austerity, as the country was in a depression. In cutting back on expenditures, Ottawa included the costs of Amerindian administration. Not only were food allotments reduced, but orders were issued that the work-for-rations rule be strictly enforced. At their most generous, rations were a pound of flour and a pound of meat per day, along with some tea and tobacco; but they could be — and all too often were — reduced to one-and-a-half pounds of flour and half a pound of bacon (for which Amerindians had little taste) twice a week.[26] The government had previously compounded the situation by sending out agents and farm instructors who would have been notable for their incapacity to deal with Amerindians under the best of circumstances, but who were disastrous when the Natives were starving. It has been estimated that three thousand Amerindians died between 1880 and 1885. As has been observed more than once, it was remarkable, not that violence occurred, but that there was so little of it.[27] One can legitimately wonder if whites under similar circumstances would have been so restrained.

The stage was set on 26 March 1885 at Duck Lake, straddling the reserves of Beardy and Okemasis, when a detachment of the North West Mounted Police ignored warnings and rode out for supplies. They marched straight into an ambush, losing twelve of their number; five Métis were killed. Word of this encounter quickly spread to the nearby reserves of Poundmaker and Little Pine; both of these chiefs decided to take advantage of the situation and go with their people to Battleford, then the capital of the North-West Territories, to demand the rations they considered to be their due. While they were on their way, some Stoneys killed an Indian Agent and a settler. The Cree, however, contented themselves with taking supplies from establishments in Battleford that had been emptied as frantic settlers sought refuge with the North West Mounted Police. For two days, 30–31 March, the pillaging continued, before the Cree finally moved to encamp on the south side of the North Saskatchewan River. Although the settlers remained bottled up in the North West Mounted Police quarters for two weeks or more as the defiant Cree roamed the surrounding countryside and continued sporadic pillaging, there were no more lives lost in that region.

To the North and West, at Frog Lake, an eruption at the beginning of April by warriors of Big Bear's band had more tragic consequences as nine men were killed. Big Bear had tried to prevent the violence, but the war chief Kapapamahchakwew (Wandering Spirit) had taken matters into his own hands. Big Bear was more effective when two weeks later the band moved east to Fort Pitt. The chief's assurances led the traders and their families under its protection to surrender, and the North West Mounted Police detachment to withdraw. In effect, the northern part of the North-West Territories was under the control of the Métis and the Cree during most of April. But the Canadian government was wasting no time in sending forces into the area; by 12 May, the Métis had been decisively defeated at Batoche, and three days later Riel had surrendered. Poundmaker and his followers came to Battleford to follow Riel's example on 26 May. Big Bear was not taken until 2 July, when he walked into Fort Carlton with his youngest son, Horse Child, to surrender to the only men in the whole Northwest who were not looking for him, as one observer remarked sourly.[28]

The consequences of the uprising were heavier for the Cree than they were for the Métis. Many more Amerindians (eighty-one) than Métis (forty-six) were arrested. Close to half of the Métis were released without trial; apart from Riel, of those who were brought to court, all charged with treason-felony — intending to levy war against the Queen — all but two accepted the offer to plea-bargain. Eleven were sentenced to seven years in jail, three to three years and four to one year; seven others were conditionally discharged.[29] For the Cree prisoners, the story was much different. The majority of them were tried for treason-felony, but some were tried for murder, as well as other charges; forty-four were convicted. Eleven were sentenced to hang, of which three were commuted to life imprisonment; other prison sentences ranged up to twenty years for manslaughter and fourteen years for arson. Prison terms were virtual death sentences; of three leading chiefs sentenced to three years each, all had to be released before their terms were up, to die within the year. Poundmaker was one of these. He protested to the court: "The bad things that have been said against me here are not true. I have worked only at trying to keep peace. This spring, when my Indians, the halfbreeds and the white men fought, I prevented further killing. As soon as I heard what had happened at Batoche I led my people and went to the white man and gave myself up. If I had not done so there would have been plenty of bloodshed. For this reason I am here... I will not excuse myself for saving the lives of so many people even if I must suffer for it now."[30] As a prisoner, he was spared at least one indignity: through the intercession of his adoptive father, Crowfoot, his hair was not cut. After serving a year of his sentence, Poundmaker's health was broken and he was released, to die shortly afterward. Big Bear, receiving a similar sentence, pleaded with the court to send an amnesty to his band, many of whom were hiding in the woods; if the government did not come forward with assistance before the winter set in, they would perish from want. He asked for consideration particularly for the children and the helpless among his people.[31] Big Bear served a year and a half of his sentence before he, too, was released for reasons of health. He also died within the year, without a reserve, his band dispersed, abandoned even by most of his own family. The third chief, Kapeyakwaskonam (One Arrow), died within a few weeks of his early release.

The verdict of some historians, that the prolonged resistance of the Micmac as well as the bloodshed of 1885 could have been prevented with a more sympathetic and careful attention to the problems of the people, does not take into account the attitudes of either period. In each case, the notion of accommodation with "savages" was unthinkable, at least in the realm of practical politics. In the rough and tumble of colonization and building nation-states, unity and conformity were the social and political ideals. Much as Amerindians might have been appreciated on their own merits in philosophic or artistic circles, in the political arena they were expected to conform to the prevailing ethos as exemplified by the dominating power. The idea of maintaining the individualities of different societies and different administrations while incorporating them within the borders of a single nation-state was not taken seriously, if considered at all.

In both the Acadian and Northwestern resistances, the Natives had been caught in circumstances beyond their control. For the Micmac, it had been colonial rivalries in which they had joined the losing side. It was not until after the Treaty of Utrecht that their struggle had become one for survival as a people, for the right to live in their own way on their own lands. The continuing presence of the French for another half-century had provided the Micmac with the weapon which had enabled them to continue their fight for so long. Playing off one colonial power against the other had also allowed the Micmac to remain essentially autonomous during this period, despite intensifying colonization and the fact that the British claimed them as subjects.

The Crees did not have the advantage of French-English colonial rivalry to put them in a bargaining position. Just as the Micmac had been indignant at being ignored by the Treaty of Utrecht, so the Cree had been outraged at the assumption that their lands belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company by virtue of a charter that had been drawn up long ago in distant London. When they heard the rumour that Hudson's Bay Company was selling the lands to Canada, the Cree reaction was unanimous. How could their lands be sold without their knowledge or consent? In the words of Abraham Wikaskokiseyin (Sweet Grass), leading chief of the River People: "We hear our lands were sold and we do not like it; we don't want to sell our lands; it is our property, and no one has the right to sell them."[32] But apart from protesting, there was little they could do.

Placed in an extremely difficult position, the Cree had to make some unwelcome choices. With the principal exception of Big Bear, most of the chiefs agreed in 1876 to make the best of a bad situation and to sign Treaty Six. It took longer to convince Big Bear, who saw signing as the equivalent of placing "a rope about our necks" — in other words, giving up their freedom.[33] He held off signing until 1882, when the starvation of his people had forced his hand. (Little Pine had signed in 1879 and Beardy had acquiesced within a week of the major signing.) Big Bear's point that the Treaty's provisions for assistance were inadequate for the needs that would arise during the period of adaptation to an unfamiliar and not always welcome new life would prove to be well taken when the crisis actually came, more suddenly than anyone expected. The looked-for supplies and equipment were slow in coming, poor in quality, and inadequate in amount. The Cree, in no position to bargain, had to make out as best they could. Starving and bitterly disillusioned with the good faith of the Canadian government, some chiefs sought alternative solutions. Big Bear, Piapot, and others as well, recognized that only in unity could the Cree make their voice heard in Ottawa, and they worked hard toward this goal. Big Bear in particular concentrated on that time-consuming task, to the extent that his frequent absences from his band gave Wandering Spirit, supported by Big Bear's son, Imasees, the opportunity to take control. The resulting violence was brief and localized (Frog Lake, Frenchman's Butte), not only because Big Bear and other Cree leaders were personally against it, but also because it did not attract the support of most of the Cree people themselves. It was only too obvious that constructive, not "final," solutions were needed. It was this perception that had restrained Crowfoot and the Blackfoot Confederacy, even though shared difficulties encouraged sympathy for the plight of the Crees, and the Blackfoot sheltered refugees from the northern encounters. Still, Crowfoot did not believe the Amerindians could win, and so he did not fight. In this, he was in accord with other leading confederacy chiefs; unlike Big Bear, they were able to keep their war chiefs in line.

It had taken the Micmacs many years of fighting before they realized that military prowess would not win the day. In their case the depletion of game had occurred more slowly, or at least it was not so dramatic; and besides, its effects were cushioned as long as colonial rivalries endured, assuring as they did the Micmac and their allies of annual "gifts" from the French sufficient to keep body and soul together. In the perception of the Micmac, such annual distributions were acknowledgements of the alliance, and of the fact that Micmac activities as guerrilla fighters benefitted the French cause as well as their own. The British had more trouble adapting to this type of diplomacy than the French; in this context, the treaty of 1752 had a special importance, officially recognizing as it did such a procedure. But it would take the French and Indian War to push the British into fully implementing gift distributions. The Micmac, in the meantime, were not threatened with starvation until after the final defeat of the French, and by then it was obvious that continuing fighting was not the solution to the problem.

The Métis of the North-West Territories, for their part, fought for recognition of what they perceived to be their rights, both as to land and as to self-government. The South Branch wanted to be recognized as a colony, but with a special status that would acknowledge both its aboriginal right and its distinctive lifestyle, which blended Amerindian and European customs. The Métis considered themselves separate from both Amerindians and white settlers, although they shared grievances with both. With few exceptions, neither the Métis nor the Cree considered themselves to be fighting for each other: each group was fighting for itself, even as it sympathized with the other.[34] If their troubles had any similarity, it was in the fact that they shared the same general situation, that of dealing with a distant and uncomprehending bureaucracy. In the Micmac wars, the Métis had not emerged as a distinct group: in the Northeast during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whatever one's biological constituency, it was cultural and spiritual conformity that determined one's classification. Even as mixed-bloods grew in numbers in Acadia, they identified either with the French or the Amerindian, but not as a separate entity. There were no Métis wars on the Atlantic Coast; nor did a charismatic figure of the stature of Louis Riel emerge, despite the duration of the eastern conflict.

The pattern of judicial reprisals also differed, although in both cases the offending Natives were considered rebels against the Crown. On the Atlantic Coast, this was not as clear as the British would have liked because of the colonial wars. Individuals who were caught were usually treated as prisoners of war, although occasionally some were hanged as pirates. In one celebrated instance, three Amerindians and two Acadians found guilty of piracy were hanged together in Boston.[35] Generally captives were held as hostages against future depredations, a procedure that could (and did, but not always) involve imprisonment, or perhaps even being shot, when it was felt that reprisals were called for. The record is too inadequate to estimate how many suffered one or the other of these fates; the very length of the conflict, as well as documentary references, suggest that the overall figure was probably higher than in the 1885 Rebellion. In the Northwest, the Natives were treated unequivocally as rebels. The brevity of the uprising dictated that judicial proceedings came after, rather than during, hostilities. One of the results was the mass hanging at Battleford, 27 November 1885, when eight Amerindians mounted a common scaffold. The termination of hostilities did not see the Micmac suffering confiscations such as the Cree did with their horses and guns; nor were the Micmac confined to reserves as the Cree were, from which they were not authorized to leave without a pass.[36] Perhaps such measures had not been considered necessary on the Atlantic Coast because by the time a general peace was signed, it was only too obvious that the Micmac were so reduced in numbers and to such a marginal existence that they no longer constituted a serious threat. The treaties that the Micmac signed did not define their position as did the numbered treaties for the Cree; and the Proclamation of 1763 was not considered to apply to the Maritimes. The reserves which they finally acquired were legislated into existence by colonial assemblies; the Micmac and Malecite, instead of surrendering land, had to negotiate to acquire even a portion of what they considered to be theirs.

In the Northeast as well as in the North-West Territories, the resistance of the Natives contributed, albeit neither immediately nor directly, to the modification of the monolithic nation-state that had been the original goal for Canada. Today, Amerindians and Métis, as well as Inuit, are recognized as part of the national mosaic. What that entails in the realm of practical politics is still in the process of being hammered out.

NOTES

1 The Micmac War was concurrent with the land/sea conflict waged by the Abenaki against the British in New England, and could be seen as part of the same confrontation. In the northern arena, Malecite fought alongside Micmac, but as the latter were both more numerous and more widespread, they were the protagonists in that part of the war which has been named for them. See Horace P. Beck, *The American Indian as a Sea Fighter in Colonial Times*, Publication #35, The Maine Historical Association, Mystic, Conn., 1959; Olive Patricia Dickason, "Louisbourg and the Indians: A Study in Imperial Race Relations, 1713-1760," *History and Archaeology* 6 (1976): 3-206; and L.F.S. Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979), 31-78. My thanks to Dr. Nicholas Wickenden, University of Alberta, for his much-appreciated editorial suggestions.

2 The bibliography for this conflict is extensive. Some recent works are: Bob Beal and Rod Macleod, *Prairie Fire. The 1885 North West Rebellion* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1984); R.C. Macleod, ed., *Reminiscences of a Bungle, by One of the Bunglers, and Two Other Northwest Rebellion Diaries* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984); Thomas Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); idem, *Riel and the Rebellion 1885 Reconsidered* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983); Desmond Morton, *The Last War Drum* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972); idem, *The Canadian General: Sir*

William Otter (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974); idem, *The Queen v Louis Riel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); W.A. Oppen, *The Riel Rebellions: A Cartographic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Hugh Dempsey, *Big Bear* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984); idem, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972); Guillaume Charette, *Vanishing Spaces: Memoirs of Louis Goulet* (Winnipeg: Editions Bois-Brûlés, 1980) (originally published as *L'Espace de Louis Goulet* in 1976); Stuart Hughes, *The Frog Lake "Massacre": Personal Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); and George Woodcock, *Gabriel Dumont* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1975).

3 As in the case of the Micmac, the Plains Cree did not fight entirely by themselves, but were the protagonists. Some Sioux and Assiniboine also fought. (Lloyd S.J. O'Brodovich, "Plains Cree Acculturation in the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Injustice," *Na'pao* 2 no. 1 (1969): 17).

4 Olive Patricia Dickason, "The Micmac Sea War against the British, 1713-1763," in Charles A. Martijn, ed., *The Micmac and the Sea* (Québec: Ministère des Affaires culturelles, in press).

5 Beal and Macleod, *Prairie Fire*, 11.

6 A recent assessment of Métis land claims is in Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion*, chapters two and three. Flanagan concluded that there was right and wrong on both sides of the confrontation over land.

7 Transforming the Amerindians into "servants of the Queen" was the avowed purpose of the Canadian government. See Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* (Toronto: Belford Clarke, 1880; Coles Reprint, 1971), 206.

8 Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC) PRO (Public Record Office) CO (Colonial Office) 217/3:203-205, à Phillips, le 10 novembre 1720.

9 Lucien Campeau, *La première mission d'Acadie (1601-1616)* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1967), 578.

10 Charles Joseph d'Entremont, *Histoire du Cap-Sable de l'An Mil au Traité de Paris, 1763*, 5 vols., (Eunice, Louisiana: Herbert Publications, 1981), 3:1422-28. For an eighteenth-century French assessment of the reasons for Micmac hostility toward the British see "Lettre de Mons. de la Varenne," in *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets, Savage Nations, Now Dependent on the Government of Cape Breton* (London: Hooper & Morley, 1758), 87-113. Land title was not mentioned.

11 Beck, *The American Indian as Sea-Fighter*, 25.

12 Johannes de Laet, *L'Histoire du Nouveau Monde, ou Description des Indes occidentales...* (Leyden: B. & A. Elzevier, 1640), 59; Bernard G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 170-71; Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus*

Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes, 20 vols., (Glasgow: MacLehose, 1905–1907), 19:400–405.

13 The Treaty of Utrecht did mention the Iroquois. Clause 15 enjoined France not to molest "les Cinq Nations ou cantons des Indiens soumis a la Grande Bretagne, ny les autres nations de l'Amérique amies de cette couronne. Pareillement, les sujets de la Grande Bretagne se comporteront pacifiquement envers les Americains sujet ou amis de la France..." (Frances Gardiner Davenport, *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies*, 4 vols., Washington, D.C., Carnegie Institution, 1917–1937. 3:213.)

14 Dickason, "Louisbourg and the Indians," 63, 73–75.

15 Philippe Pastour de Costebelle, first governor of Ile Royale (1713–1717), while noting "qu'il faloit maintenir les Sauvages dans ces Sentiments, sans cependant que cela parut ouvertement et de menager la chose avec beaucoup de prudence et de secret pour ne point donner aux Anglais occasion de plainte" at the same time wrote to the English that he was doing his best to discourage the Micmac, whose actions were "desagreable au Roy." PAC AC C11B 1:334v–336, lettre de Costebelle, le 2 octobre 1715, en délibérations du conseil, le 28 mars 1716.

16 James Phinney Baxter, *The Pioneers of New France and New England* (Albany: Munsell, 1894), 312–13.

17 George A. Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotia Relations 1630 to 1784* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 129, citing *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1722–1723*, 142, Richard Philipps (governor of Nova Scotia, 1717–1749) to Lords of Trade & Plantations, 9 September 1722.

18 *Collection de documents inédits sur le Canada et l'Amérique publiés par le Canada-Français*, 3 vols., (Québec: Demers, 1888–1890, 1:1719), Déclaration de guerre des Micmacs aux Anglais, le 8 octobre 1749. Presented to the English in Micmac, it was translated into French by Abbé Pierre-Antoine-Simon Maillard, the best-known of missionaries to the Micmacs, and sent to Paris "as a curiosity," 18 October 1749. A slightly earlier variation was published in *Report Concerning Canadian Archives 1905*, 3 vols., 1906, II: Appendix A, pt. III in "Acadian Genealogy and Notes," by Placide Gaudet, 293. For the rumour of British intentions to destroy the Micmac, see *Customs and Manners*, 68–69.

19 PAC Nova Scotia A 35:4, Cornwallis (governor of Nova Scotia 1749–1752) to Secretary of State, 20 August 1749; Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty, eds., *Canada and its Provinces*, 23 vols., (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook, 1914–1917), 13:98–99.

20 PAC AC C11B 8:47, Joseph de Monbeton de Brouillan *dit* Saint-Ovide (governor of Ile Royale 1718–1739) à Jean-Frédéric Phé-

lypeaux, Comte de Maurepas (Minister of the Marine, 1723–1749), le 18 novembre 1726; ibid., 9:64v, Saint-Ovide à Maurepas, le 20 novembre 1727; d'Entremont, *Histoire du Cap Sable*, 4:1601–1602; Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists*, 44–45.

21 PAC AC C11B 9:66–67, Saint-Ovide à Maurepas, le 20 novembre 1727; ibid., 10:4–5, lettre de Saint-Ovide, le 13 septembre 1727 en délibérations du conseil, le 17 février 1728; ibid., B52/2:343–348, Maurepas à Saint-Ovide, le 20 juin 1728 (transcript).

22 PAC AC C11B 10:190, Saint-Ovide à Maurepas, le 1 novembre 1729; ibid., B 54/2:566–67, conseil à Saint-Ovide, le 27 juin 1730 (transcript); ibid., C11B 11:38, François le Coutre de Bourville, king's lieutenant at Ile Royale, 1730–1744) à Maurepas, le 30 novembre 1730.

23 PAC AC C11B 33:160–61, Jacques Prevost de La Croix (financial commissary for Ile Royale 1749–1758) à Antoine-Louis Rouillé, Comte de Joüy, (Minister of the Marine, 1749–1758), 12 mai 1753; Gaston du Bosq de Beaumont, *Les derniers jours de l'Acadie (1748–1758)* (Paris: Emile Lechevalier, 1899), 72.

24 PAC AC C12, 1:30, Mémoire du Roy pour servir d'instruction au Sr Dangeac nommé au gouvernement des Iles St Pierre et de Miquelon, le 23 février 1763.

25 E.E. Rich, ed., *Eden Colvile's Letters, 1849–52* (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1956); introduction by W.L. Morton, lxv–lxvi, lxix et passim. E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 262–64.

26 Dempsey, *Big Bear*, 202. See also G.F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 271–74.

27 See, for instance, the remarks of NWMP Commissioner James F. Macleod, as cited by Beal and Macleod, in *Prairie Fire*, 61. According to Dr. Don Sprague, University of Manitoba, the estimate of 3,000 deaths from starvation appears in the correspondence of Edgar Dewdney, Lieutenant-Governor for the North-West Territories, 1881–1888. Dr. Sprague said this during a panel discussion on Louis Riel in the "1885 and After Conference," University of Saskatchewan, 2–4 May 1985, responding to a statement from the floor that the number of Cree deaths between 1880 and 1885 was 10,000. See also Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 271.

28 Beal and Macleod, *Prairie Fire*, 290.

29 Ibid., 309.

30 Norma Sluman, *Poundmaker* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1967), 270.

31 Dempsey, *Big Bear*, 192.

32 Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 170.

33 Apparently Big Bear's remark was mistranslated to say he did not

want to be hanged. The original version of the incident is in Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 192; the mistranslation explanation is in Dempsey, *Big Bear*, 74.

34 The principal exception was the warriors of the band of Kapeyakwaskonam (One Arrow), whose reserve was the closest to the South Branch settlement. See *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 11, s.v. Kapeyakwaskonam.

35 Clarence Joseph d'Entremont, "Acadiens et Amérindiens pendu à Boston 13 novembre 1726" *Les cahiers de la Société acadienne* 16, no. 1 (1985), 31.

36 In fact, the pass system for Plains Cree reserves had begun to be implemented before the outbreak of hostilities, as John Jennings points out elsewhere in this volume.

The Impact on Eastern Canada of Events in Saskatchewan in 1885

A.I. Silver

In the early weeks of 1885, few Canadians expected news of war to come from the North-West. The real trouble spots of the world were in Afghanistan and the Sudan. And yet, suddenly, in late March, there it was in their newspapers: On the banks of the Saskatchewan, just as in Asia and Africa, "le canon gronde, les sabres étincellent, les fusils s'abaissent et crachent le plomb."[1] Nor was the Saskatchewan rebellion the least serious of these conflicts, for loyalist losses at Duck Lake were reported to have been greater than those of Britain in some Egyptian and Sudanese battles.[2]

Faced with what seemed to be a world class rebellion, most eastern Canadians were determined to react with world class vigour. "The insurrection must be quelled at once," proclaimed *The Globe*. "The people of all Canada demand that the Government take the most prompt and energetic measures for its immediate suppression."[3] *Le Nouveau Monde* of Montréal agreed: the government must "agir vite et frapper fort."[4] Everywhere volunteers stepped forward; everywhere they were given enthusiastic support. A soldier reported that when the Nova Scotia battalion left Halifax, "everyone was beside himself with enthusiasm..."[5] At Montréal, "la foule répandue un peu partout, grimpée sur les toits, massée sur le parapet, acclame les jeunes soldats et les salue de cris enthousiastes."[6] And at Toronto, university authorities announced special exemptions from spring term work, and even the campus rifle club turned out for active duty.[7]

This is not to say that warlike ferocity was totally unrestrained. The raising of a Halifax battalion met opposition from some local businessmen and Nova Scotia separatists. In Québec, determination to uphold Canada's authority was sometimes balanced by an unpleasant feeling that to fight against Métis rebels would be to "se battre contre des compatriotes."[8] And even in Ontario there was a pervasive feeling that this campaign might not have been necessary if Canada had treated the Métis fairly. Of course, Liberals everywhere had an obvious interest in taking that line; it enabled them to criticize the Tory government. "For this insurrection the Government are wholly responsible," affirmed the Grit organ of London, Ontario.[9] But non-Liberals also made the point: "People do not rebel for nothing. The settlers in the North-West have tangible grievances."[10] Even Tories often admitted it — though they tended to blame local administrators in the territory rather than the federal government. The result was that even in Ontario the determination to suppress the rebellion and punish its leaders was mixed with a considerable sympathy for the Métis. "In punishing the men whose hands are today stained with blood," said an Ottawa paper, "let us not forget the grievances which stirred these men to this dreadful extreme step."[11]

Perhaps these moderating feelings were more prevalent among Maritimers than Ontarians, Liberals than Conservatives, French than English Canadians; but all shared them to some degree. At the same time, all were united in cheering on the troops, worrying about their safety, trembling at news of Indian massacres, and hoping for the reaffirmation of Canadian authority. And the consciousness of sharing those concerns created a certain sense of solidarity. What's more, news from the North-West, whether in volunteers' letters or newspaper reports, regularly spoke of battalions from different parts of the country meeting, cheering each other, marching and fighting together — and this reinforced the sense of a common effort in a common cause. When Batoche was taken, although no French Canadian unit had participated in the action, Québécois could still speak of "*nos* volontaires ... *Nos* pertes ... *nos* prisonniers."[12] Similarly, Toronto could give a wildly enthusiastic reception to the returning Halifax and Québec City troops, because they "were fighting for a common cause and a common country with our own men."[13]

The whole campaign could thus be seen as a unifying experience:

> The men who made that march from Halifax, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto and London realised fully for the first time what it is to be comrades in a common cause. ... To-day, for the first time since confederation, the Haligonian and the Winnipegger, the Quebecer [*sic*] and the Torontonian feel the pulsations of a common sorrow ... and a common pride ...[14]

French Canadian volunteers themselves could feel an excitement that transcended racial and religious lines. After the Québec *Voltigeurs* had paraded through Toronto, accompanied by two local bands, fireworks, huge cheering crowds, and shouts of "Vive St-Roch! Vive Québec!" one of the soldiers commented:

> Jamais un général victorieux ne fit dans Rome une entrée triomphale plus brillante que notre marche à travers les rues de Toronto ... Dans cette ville essentiellement anglaise et protestante, on nous rendait hommage, à nous français et catholiques.[15]

It showed, as the battalion's commander later told the House of Commons, "that after all — although different in race and religion — we are one people fighting for a common flag."[16]

Unfortunately, this sense of unity was not to endure. Even in the midst of the campaign, trouble was brewing. For while people everywhere could recognise the Métis grievances, sympathy for the Métis was particularly strong in Québec. French Canadians had not forgotten, after all, how these people, related to them in race and religion, had been abused in the past, how they had been persecuted by Ontarians in Manitoba after the Red River uprising, how long and hard had been the fight for an amnesty, and how, even when it came, it excluded Riel and Ambroise Lépine from its full application. They remembered too the 1879 attempt to drop the official use of French in Manitoba. Small wonder, then, that even while supporting the suppression of the revolt, they sympathised openly with the Métis. "La cause des Métis nous est chère," admitted a Bleu editor. "Ils nous tiennent de trop près, par le sang, pour que nous puissions rester indifférents à leur bonne ou mauvaise fortune."[17]

Most English Canadians could probably accept that such feelings were "natural and creditable." It was not to be expected, said *The Week* of Toronto, "that the men of Quebec should not only march alongside to put down the rebellion, as they are doing, but should also curse the rebels."[18] However, some Québécois got quite carried away by their sympathies. People in other provinces began to read reports of public meetings that actually justified the resort to arms. In Montréal, a newspaper appeared — briefly, but long enough to make an impression — proclaiming itself the mouthpiece of the rebellious Métis, celebrating their triumphs over the Canadian forces, and defending Riel himself for starting the rebellion. A Québec MPP was reported to have said he hoped Riel would "make mincemeat" of the Ontario troops sent against him.[19]

Such reports were bound to disturb some Ontarians at least. They remembered how French Canadians had upheld Riel after his first uprising, how French Canadian political pressure had forced the Mackenzie government to concede an amnesty not merely for the rebellion (which all could readily have accepted) but even for the murder of Thomas Scott. They remembered too that Riel's first rebellion had forced official bilingualism and a dual school system upon the West, despite a clear previous understanding that the West would be developed on English-speaking and non-denominational lines. Now, these disturbing reports from Québec led some people to fear that French Canada really supported this rebellion as well. One or two newspapers began, in fact, to make open and repeated accusations. Even if most Québécois were not rebels, claimed the Toronto *News*, "there are considerable numbers of French Canadians who have more sympathy with Riel and his purposes than they have with the Dominion troops."[20] By the end of the campaign *The News* was going much farther than that. The Métis grievances, it said, had not been the real cause of the rebellion. The Métis had been "mere tools," manipulated by "the leading spirits among the French Canadians," who aimed at "building up on the prairies a second Quebec" — and even more, "the complete reconquest of Canada, the establishment on a firm and lasting basis of French ascendancy throughout the Dominion."[21]

Such accusations — even if they came from only one or two papers — were bound to create a bad impression in Québec. "On ne veut point de Français dans le Nord-Ouest," complained a Montréal editor, suggesting that the troops were being used not just to suppress rebellion but to get rid of the French population in the North-West.[22] In other words, by expressing anger at the idea of French Canadian influence being extended into the North-West, *The News* created the impression in Québec that it was not rebellion but French Catholicism that Ontario wanted to put down.

This impression was bound to affect the way in which French Québécois viewed the treatment of Riel after his arrest. That he should stand trial, all could agree. That he would be convicted and sentenced to hang, few French Canadians could believe. For, aside from the fact that the real and serious grievances of the Métis were extenuating circumstances which ought to make the court lenient in dealing with him, Riel could hardly be found guilty, since he was insane. His past confinements in Québec asylums, his erratic behaviour during the rebellion, General Middleton's own belief that he was "atteint d'une monomanie religieuse"[23] — all this seemed to confirm that Riel was "un insensé, un illuminé entièrement irresponsable de ses actes."[24] He had started the rebellion "sans se rendre compte de ce qu'il faisait," and therefore could not be guilty.[25] And yet Ontarians seemed thoroughly insensitive to these facts. One saw them "s'acharner à Riel, demander sa tête et menacer même de se faire justice, si les autorités retardent à les satisfaire."[26] What could be the reason for that if not their "orgueil de race,"[27] their detestation of Riel's race and religion?

Given this point of view, it is not surprising that French Canadians were shocked and angered by the outcome of Riel's trial. On hearing the news, commented an Eastern Townships editor, "toute la province de Québec s'est émue..."[28] A Montréal Conservative put it more dramatically in a letter to Adolphe Chapleau: "le diable est aux vaches d'un bout à l'autre de la Province... Tu n'as pas d'idée de la violence avec laquelle nos meilleurs amis s'expriment."[29] Even the principal Bleu organ encouraged Québécois to organize, petition, and plead in order to save Riel.[30] More than 1,200 citizens of Montréal and Lachine signed telegrams to Sir John A. Macdonald urging him to spare Riel's life, while over 15,000 people supported forty-nine petitions to the governor-general — forty-one from Québec and eight from French-speaking areas of Ontario and the West.[31] Meetings, rallies, and demonstrations were held throughout Québec, and newspapers of every party or tendency gave their support. So intense and so unanimous was public feeling, that Québec Conservatives even began to panic. They bombarded Macdonald with warnings: "even your best supporters will not be able to stand the position if Riel is hanged."[32] "S'il y avait exécution, la position des ministres de la Province et des députés serait des plus périlleux."[33] "Riel's execution means our downfall."[34]

How, people demanded, could the court sentence to death a man "qui n'est pas coupable, puisqu'il est fou,"[35] and in whose case there were such important mitigating circumstances? Surely an English Canadian would never be hanged in such conditions? Indeed, many petitions pointed out that an English Canadian, William Jackson, who had been Riel's secretary and was thought to be as fully implicated in the rebellion as he, had been found insane with a "facilité inconcevable,"[36] and thereby saved. It was obvious, therefore, that Riel was the victim of discrimination simply because he was French and Catholic. The impression of Ontario opinion already created by the Toronto *News* made this seem credible. Since French Canadians had already been brought to fear that Ontarians were out to punish not rebellion but French Catholicism, they could believe now that if Riel were hanged, it would only be because the "francophobes du Haut-Canada" wanted to attack his nationality through him: "C'est l'élément canadien-français qu'on veut faire danser au bout de la corde!"[37]

As it happened, French Québécois were mistaken about Ontario opinion. Many in that province were actually opposed to the execution. After all, wrote a correspondent of the Montréal *Witness*, Riel had only carried out "the desires of the people living in that country" and been inspired by a desire to help them.[38] His offense was thus a political one, and, as Principal Grant told a Halifax audience, "the enlightened sense of the nineteenth century was opposed to death sentences for political offenses."[39] Nor were all English Canadians convinced of Riel's sanity. A Markham, Ontario, physician wrote to *The Mail* that all Riel's actions showed he "is insane and has been so for years, and consequently irresponsible for his actions..."[40] Many argued, too, that Riel should be spared out of consideration for French Canada. "Regard the feelings of thousands of our French fellow-countrymen," urged an Anglican clergyman. The "peace and harmony" of the country were more important than the hanging of a criminal, even though he was "justly deserving of death."[41]

Certainly, most Ontarians — most English Canadians everywhere — did think the sentence should be carried out. But they could not feel that Riel's race or religion had anything to do with their opinion. "Now Sir John," wrote a volunteer to the prime minister, "were Riel a protestant or even an orange I would say hang him at once..."[42] It was the facts of his case that stood against him. That he had instigated and led the rebellion was undeniable. The evidence presented at the trial "was clear and conclusive."[43] "His crime was so open and so easily proved that hardly a pretense was or could be set up that he was innocent."[44]

That the Métis grievances could in any way excuse him did not seem reasonable to most people. After all, he had not shared in those grievances, but had lived abroad and only come to Canada to "fan into a fierce flame the embers of discontent."[45] What's more, testimony at the trial showed that he had been willing to sell out the Métis, to abandon their cause, if he could get "from the Government a large sum of money as the price of his retirement."[46] Far from being mitigating circumstances, the Métis grievances made his guilt seem worse, for he had seen in them only the chance "to make a big stake for himself."[47]

Nor could most people believe in Riel's madness after the trial. Testimony, including that of experts, had made it "manifest" that Riel was sane.[48] So had his own behaviour. "A very able and eloquent speech, which the judge permitted him to deliver to the jury, leads many to believe that Riel is sound in mind," observed *The Irish Canadian*.[49] As for the erratic behaviour which French Canadians interpreted as madness, it certainly was odd, but not to the point of making him irresponsible for his acts. "He may be insane enough to declare himself the Mahdi of the half-breeds, but quite sane enough to be responsible for his acts of rebellion and murder."[50] And after all, how could a madman have organised and led two rebellions, inspired and held the confidence of his followers through both? "A lunatic who can undertake and engineer two rebellions ... is a kind of a lunatic that must be held accountable for his deeds."[51]

It certainly never occurred to English Canadians to compare Riel with Jackson. For aside from the fact that the Canadian troops had found the latter among Riel's prisoners and not acting as his accomplice, Jackson had been reported from the outset to be "hopelessly insane, and so violent that it is necessary to keep his limbs pinioned."[52] *There* was a manifestation of madness that a pre-Freudian public could recognize, and that was why English Canadians found nothing unusual about Jackson's trial.

Not only was Riel sane and without excuse, but this was his second rebellion. He was a recidivist, a two-time offender, "not only a rebel in the present, but in the past ... not only accused of inciting murder and outrage today but of having authorised murder in the past."[53] If he were let go, would there not be a third offence in the future? Thus, one of Macdonald's correspondents warned him that "to commute the sentence of so dastardly a man would be to indanger [*sic*] the country of another bloody rebellion."[54]

Above all, people found it hard to forgive Riel for having incited the Indians to join the rebellion. At a time when western Indians were spreading terror in Mexico and the United States, the very idea of Indian war inspired the worst possible dread. Yet Riel had provoked just such a thing. "By his orders the horrors of an Indian war were let loose upon unoffending settlers; priests and laymen, the wives of settlers and the Sisters of Mercy fell victims."[55] Newspaper headlines in April and May had reflected the panic Canadians felt: "Battleford in Ashes. Settlers pillaged and killed";[56] "Perilous Position of the Women and Children";[57] "Mrs. Delaney Horribly Done to Death";[58] "Priests Burned to Death."[59] And for all this "slaughter of defenceless people by the Indians"[60] Riel was responsible. In the eyes of many, his "instigation of the savages to rapine and bloodshed" was "the chief burden of Riel's offence."[61]

No country could tolerate such a thing: "society must protect itself against such criminals, and the only protection is to take from the offenders all power to repeat their crimes."[62] Also, Riel's execution would "deter all such lawless villains in future in this country."[63] And that was essential, "for the safety of society,"[64] "the safety of the nation,"[65] and above all, the "safety of thousands of our countrymen in the North-West."[66]

With all these reasons for allowing the execution to take place, how could French Canadians be so massively, so unanimously opposed? Their very unanimity raised the suspicion that they were inspired not by a sense of justice but only by racial feeling. After all, "no one can believe that if Louis Riel were an Englishman that Quebec would have taken the slightest interest in his fate."[67] French Canadians seemed to be saying that a member of their nationality should "go scot free for the perpetration of crimes for which an Englishman, an Irishman, a Scotchman, or a man of any other nationality would be hanged."[68] They were thus unwilling to accept "an equal scale of justice for French and English alike."[69]

This view of Québec opinion naturally got English Canadians' backs up. "If the French Canadians think there is one law for them and another for us, never since Canada became a country was a better time to undeceive them than the present."[70] Even if for no other reason, the execution would be necessary to teach French Canadians the lesson of equal justice. Three of the four pro-hanging petitions to the governor-general stated explicitly that they were only being sent because of the pro-Riel movement in Québec.[71] And D'Alton McCarthy wrote to Macdonald that support for the execution in Toronto was "the natural outcome of the feelings the French Canadians display to save his neck."[72]

Such a reaction, however, could only convince French Canadians that they were right in seeing Riel as the victim of anti-French prejudice. English Canadians seemed to be saying, after all, that he should be hanged because of them. His execution in such circumstances would be "le triomphe de l'orangisme sur le catholicisme,"[73] the victory of "Ceux qui haïssent le nom canadien-français,"[74] and an "humiliation pour la race canadienne-française."[75]

No wonder the execution, when it did take place, provoked such a universal outburst of indignation among French Québécois. They saw it as a triumph for fanatical English Canadians who hated everything French and Catholic. Why was Riel dead? "Parce qu'il était français."[76] It wasn't a question of criminal guilt; "il expie surtout le crime d'appartenir à notre race."[77] Through his death the fanatics of English Canada had expressed their "rage aveugle contre la nationalité canadienne-française."[78] No wonder they had greeted the hanging with "réjouissances féroces"[79] and an "infernale orgie de fanatisme et de haine contre le nom français."[80] Even the leading Bleu organ admitted that "la main qui lui a passé au cou la corde du gibet a souffleté en passant toute une nation."[81]

With this view in mind, furious French Canadians took to the streets, gathered at protest rallies, burned effigies of federal ministers and threatened to burn their houses as well. Everywhere in Québec flags were lowered to half-mast, black mourning was worn, children were sent home from school, businesses closed and municipal councils cancelled their meetings. Everywhere, day after day, night after night, manifestations of anger and mourning — official and unofficial, organised and spontaneous — could be seen.[82]

This reaction annoyed English Canadians, many of whom began to realise now for the first time how strong and how widespread had been the French Canadian desire to save Riel's life. They had accepted the execution as a sad but necessary act of justice. "Now I do not feel like rejoicing at the death of any person," wrote one of the prime minister's correspondents, "but this man has outraged all the forms of law and order and he deserved his fate, yes richly."[83] Editorialists expressed the same opinion: "No one wanted the blood of Riel, but everyone was anxious that justice should be maintained."[84] Why, then, were French Canadians protesting? "Had he been a Scotchman, an Irishman or a German they would never have entered one word of protest against the sentence of the court being carried out."[85] What they wanted was special privilege for their nationality, "one law for the English-speaking people and a less severe one for the French."[86] They seemed to be saying that their "race is entitled to ride over the law."[87]

The Riel affair thus provoked mutual suspicions between French and English Canadians. Each side feared that the other was denying the principle of equal justice and trying to seize for itself special privilege, special power, special status. Of course, no open race war came out of these suspicions. Several factors kept passions within bounds. Geographical and psychological distance kept Maritimers relatively calm. To be sure, most English speakers in the region approved the execution, while Acadians tended not to approve. Yet none of the petitions for or against the hanging came from a maritime province, and of all the letters sent to Macdonald personally, only one bore a maritime address.

Partisan interests also helped to muffle racial discord. Since neither political party could form a stable federal government without uniting support from both French and English Canada, both tried to keep peace between them. Tories tried to play down the agitation in Québec, claiming it was confined to a few scheming Liberals, and thus (as the *Charlottetown Examiner* put it) "lacks bottom, and must be short-lived."[88] Liberals, for their part, hoped to win the support of French Canadians, and had, therefore, to make them acceptable as allies to their English Canadian adherents. Québécois anger, affirmed *The St. John Telegraph*, was directed only against the Tories, not against English Canadians, "and we hope and trust that the two races may always hold the most friendly feelings for each other."[89]

Time, lethargy, common sense, the press of everyday concerns — all these also helped to prevent any serious open conflict. And yet, attitudes were permanently marked by the Riel affair. Québécois had experienced an intensity of concern about French Catholicism in the West which they had never felt before. At the same time, their feeling that French Canada had been attacked and defeated in the hanging of Riel stimulated a desire to see that nationality strengthen and affirm itself, particularly in its Québec stronghold; and that desire helped bring Honoré Mercier to power.

Unfortunately, the Riel affair had left many English Canadians with considerable mistrust of French Canadian nationalism. That nationalism had seemed to put French Canadianism above the law, above the fundamental principle of equality, and "above the general good of the whole dominion."[90] Indeed, their attitude throughout the affair seemed to reflect "a determination on the part of our French fellow-countrymen not in any way to regard themselves as one with us."[91] In refusing to submit to the same laws as everyone else, they had shown that "New France is a separate nation from British Canada,"[92] that the country they loved "is not the Canada which stretches from Atlantic to Pacific," but only that portion which they could dominate.[93] How could Canada survive with such a disruptive force within her? "We want one nationality, one loyalty, one patriotism for Canada, and that from an assimilation of Celt, Saxon, and Gaul."[94]

Such notions naturally prepared English Canadians to respond badly to Mercier's ostentatious nationalism and to the Jesuits' Estates Act. Those things only confirmed the suspicions aroused by the Riel affair: "As long as Canada has a dual nationality we cannot become a great and progressive country with common aspirations and an indivisible patriotism . . . ."[95] Indeed, the whole tendency of nineteenth century history, with its great national unifications of Germany and Italy, showed that successful countries had to be built on single nationalities.[96] Canada too, if it were to survive, must have a national unification, the development of a single identity. "English law and English language should prevail."[97] If these could not be forced upon Québec, at least that province's distinctive language and disruptive character should not be allowed to flourish in other parts of Canada.

But when such notions led to support for the disestablishment of French language and Catholic schools in the West, and to attacks on both in Ontario, French Canadians became very worried. Assertive nationalism, they began to feel, ought perhaps to be replaced by peaceful relations, "la paix, l'harmonie des races en ce pays."[98] Mutual suspicions must give way to a "politique de bon vouloir et de respect mutuel."[99]

Mutual respect, however, did not mean assimilation. After the Riel affair had involved them so emotionally in the French Catholicism of the West, Québécois were bound to insist on its rights there as the basis of harmony and unity between the races. "Les deux nationalités doivent vivre en parfaite harmonie; mais pour arriver à cette fin elles ne doivent pas se traiter injustement."[100] To make Confederation succeed, "il n'est pas nécessaire ... que cette nation ne parle d'autre langue que la langue anglaise."[101] Indeed, the permanence of Confederation had to be based on acceptance of complete linguistic and cultural duality, on official bilingualism in every single province and region.[102]

Thus, at a time when more and more English Canadians were coming to see uniculturalism as the only hope for Canada's unity and future development, French Canadians were coming to the opposite view: that only by accepting complete duality as its basis could Canada ever thrive. The resulting confrontation would continue through decades of bitterness and resentment. And to it both sides had been brought by a series of reactions and counter-reactions that began with events in Saskatchewan in 1885.

NOTES

1 *Le Monde Illustré* (Montréal), 4 April 1885.

2 *The Ottawa Free Press*, 28 March 1885.

3 *The Globe* (Toronto), 30 March 1885.

4 *Le Nouveau Monde* (Montréal), 31 March 1885.

5 William Tupper, quoted by G.F.G. Stanley, "New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and the North-West Rebellion, 1885," in J.E. Foster, ed., *The Developing West* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 82.

6 C.R. Daoust, *Cent-vingt jours de service actif* (Montréal: Senécal & Fils, 1886), 21-22.

7 *The Varsity* (Toronto), 28 March 1885.

8 Anonymous letter to Adolphe Caron, the minister of militia. Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), Caron Papers (MG 27, I, D3), Vol. 199.

9 *The London Advertiser*, 27 March 1885.

10 *The World*, (Toronto), 31 March 1885.

11 *The Ottawa Free Press*, 28 March 1885.

12 *Le Courrier de St-Hyacinthe*, 16 May 1885.

13 *The Telegram* (Toronto), 23 July 1885.

14 *The News* (Toronto), 26 April 1885.

15 George Beauregard, *Le 9^e bataillon au Nord-Ouest* (Québec: Gingras, 1886), 93-94.

16 Quoted in the *Ottawa Free Press*, 12 March 1886.

17 *Le Pionnier de Sherbrooke*, 9 April 1885.

18 *The Week* (Toronto), 25 June 1885. For this and a number of other quotations in this paper I am indebted to my colleague Paul Rutherford, who generously gave me access to all his own research in nineteenth century Canadian newspapers.

19 *The News*, 28 April 1885.

20 Ibid., 5 May 1885.

21 Ibid., 27 May 1885.

22 *La Patrie* (Montréal), 15 May 1885.

23 *Le Courrier de St-Hyacinthe*, 23 May 1885.

24 *La Patrie*, 18 May 1885.

25 *L'Union des Cantons de l'Est* (Arthabaskaville), 30 May 1885.

26 Ibid., 13 June 1885.

27 *La Revue Canadienne* (Montréal), 21 (1885): 316.

28 *L'Union des Cantons de l'Est*, 8 August 1885.

29 In PAC, Chapleau Papers (MG 27, I, C3), Correspondence. Arthur Dansereau to J.-A. Chapleau (Montréal, 5 August 1885).

30 *La Minerve* (Montréal), 3, 5 & 6 August 1885.

31 The telegrams to Macdonald are in PAC, Macdonald Papers, Correspondence Relating to the Execution of Louis Riel (MG 26, A, Vol. 108). The petitions are published in *Epitome of Parliamentary Documents in Connection with the North-West Rebellion, 1885* (Ottawa: Maclean, Rogers, 1886), 239-87.

32 PAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 108. G. Amyot to Sir John Macdonald (Québec, 12 November 1885).

33 PAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 108. Alph. Desjardins to Sir John Macdonald (Montréal, 10 November 1885).

34 PAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 108. P.A. Crosby to Sir John Macdonald (Montréal, 10 November 1885).

35 *Le Monde Illustré*, 8 August 1885.

36 *Le Courrier de St-Hyacinthe*, 15 August 1885.

37 *L'Union des Cantons de l'Est*, 14 November 1885.

38 Reprinted in the *Ottawa Free Press*, 5 August 1885.

39 Reported in the *London Advertiser*, 7 September 1885.

40 *The Mail* (Toronto), 12 August 1885.

41 Ibid., 10 November 1885.

42 "A volunteer" to Sir John Macdonald (Toronto, n.d.).

43 *The Sarnia Observer*, 7 August 1885.

44 *The Hamilton Spectator*, 3 August 1885.

45 *The Sarnia Observer*, 27 March 1885.

46 *The London Free Press*, 3 August 1885.

47 C.A. Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions* (Toronto: Grip, 1886), 408.

48 *The London Free Press*, 3 August 1885.

49 *The Irish Canadian* (Toronto), 6 August 1885.

50 *The Northern Advance* (Barrie), 21 May 1885.

51 *The Acton Free Press*, 28 May 1885.

52 *The London Advertiser*, 16 May; *The Telegram*, 15 May; *The World*, 19 May; *The Ottawa Citizen*, 16 May 1885.

53 *The Ottawa Free Press*, 3 August 1885.

54 Letter to Macdonald from "a volunteer's sister who has reason to mourn," (n.p., n.d.).

55 *The Telegram*, 20 November 1885.

56 *The Ottawa Citizen*, 1 April 1885.

57 *The London Advertiser*, 2 April 1885.

58 *The World*, 20 May 1885.

59 *The Ottawa Citizen*, 24 April 1885.

60 Ibid., 4 May 1885.

61 *The Mail*, 16 November 1885.

62 *The Hamilton Spectator*, 3 August 1885.

63 *The Brampton Conservator*, 7 August 1885.

64 *The Northern Advance*, 19 November 1885.

65 Rev. Bro. Walsh speaking to Ottawa Orangemen, as reported in the *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 August 1885.

66 *The Brampton Conservator*, 13 November 1885.

67 *The London Advertiser*, 3 September 1885.

68 *The Northern Advance*, 24 September 1885.

69 *The Mail*, 16 November 1885.

70 *The Hamilton Spectator*, reprinted in the *Ottawa Free Press*, 11 November 1885.

71 *Epitome of Parliamentary Documents*, 235, 237-38.

72 D'Alton McCarthy to Sir John Macdonald (Toronto, 24 August 1885).

73 *L'Electeur* (Québec), 13 November 1885.

74 *L'Union des Cantons de l'Est*, 14 November 1885.

75 *L'Etendard* (Montréal), 16 November 1885.

76 *La Mort de Riel et la voix du sang* (n.p., n.d.), 15.

77 *La Presse* (Montréal), 16 November 1885.

78 *Le Nouveau Monde*, 17 November 1885.

79 *L'Etendard*, 16 November 1885.

80 *La Mort de Riel*, 4.

81 *La Minerve*, 18 November 1885.

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87 *The Western Herald* of Amherstburg, quoted in the *London Free Press*, 2 December 1885.

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90 *The World*, 21 September 1885.

91 *The London Advertiser*, 8 September 1885.

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95 *The Sentinel & Orange and Protestant Advocate*, 27 June 1889.

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97 *The Telegram*, 22 September 1885.

98 *Le Courrier de St-Hyacinthe*, 5 September 1889.

99 *L'Union des Cantons de l'Est*, 12 October 1889.

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Colonization Companies and the North-West Rebellion

André N. Lalonde

When the federal government drew up legislation providing for the creation of colonization companies during the early 1880s, its purpose was to populate the Canadian West as quickly as possible while simultaneously offering to its friends the opportunity to make money. Little did the eastern legislators, their capitalist friends and mandarins realize that their perception of progress, their ignorance of the prairie region and their insensitivity to the plight of those affected by their pursuit of empire building would help lead to a Rebellion, which undermined their chief goal, the advance of settlement. The government and colonization companies unwittingly exacerbated the tensions which caused the Rebellion. And the effects of that Rebellion were felt by the government and the colonization companies, by new settlers and old, and, most unfortunately, by the Métis and Indians.

During the height of the speculative boom occasioned by the ratification of the Canadian Pacific Railway (hereafter CPR) contract, the government was subjected to tremendous pressure by political allies and members of the business community who were requesting some form of legislation which would allow them to invest some of their capital under favourable terms in the promised land. The government recognized the opportunity to recover part of the funds granted to the CPR while simultaneously securing the assistance of men of means to develop "the last best west." On 23 December 1881, the Macdonald government voted an order in council providing for the sale of odd-numbered sections of land situated a minimum of twenty-four miles north of the projected railway line to wealthy entrepreneurs. These investors would pay the recommended price of $2.00 per acre for their lands, but would receive a rebate of $160.00 from the government for every settler who would locate within their tract of land. The speculators lobbying the government expected a massive influx of settlers and foresaw that the land they had obtained for $1.00 per acre — after the rebate — could be sold for prices ranging up to $15.00 per acre.

Of the more than three hundred applicants, only twenty-seven corporations ratified a contract with the government. Several of the speculators viewed the regulations governing colonization companies as being too stringent while others foresaw that the speculative bubble in the Canadian West was about to burst. Some of the corporations refused to waste more capital in a futile venture and remained idle while others invested time and money to promote settlement on their tracts of land. Still others devoted most of their efforts to convincing the government that they needed to exchange their lands of marginal quality for lands of superior quality if they hoped to achieve any form of success.

The government often succumbed to pressure; the ensuing transactions, often executed without due care and attention, caused a furore which exceeded the contracting parties' wildest expectations.

When a group of Métis proceeded to Prince Albert to file entry for the lands on which they had squatted, they were informed by the newly-appointed government land agent that the Governor-in-Council had acceded on 4 August 1883 to a request submitted by the directors of the Prince Albert Colonization Company to exchange part of their allotment for Township 45 in Range 27 on which the village of St. Louis de Langevin stood and that they were required to register their claim with the company's local agent. Genuinely alarmed, the heads of the twenty-four Métis families residing in the area contiguous to St. Louis de Langevin interpreted this transaction as a notice of eviction, an outright expropriation of their farms, solely for the gain of the federal government's *protégés*. Thus, one of the colonization companies had innocently contributed to the malaise and heightened the unrest experienced by the Métis in 1883-84.

Hoping to reverse the government's sale of a parish to a colonization company, the inhabitants of St. Louis de Langevin and the surrounding district had petitioned Sir John A. Macdonald on 19 November 1883 to request the grant of surveys in river lots.[1] On 19 January 1884, Father Vegreville, missionary at St. Louis de Langevin, wrote to Captain Deville, chief inspector of surveys, to inform the latter that the government's procrastinations were forcing several settlers to abandon their farms and leave the settlement.[2]

Louis Riel insisted in his last *mémoire* that the sale of a parish to the Prince Albert Colonization Company and the government's refusal to remedy the situation had caused the Métis much anguish and aggravated the atmosphere of dissatisfaction.

> La Puissance arriva à ne plus garder aucune modération. Elle vendit à une société de colonisation une paroisse métisse toute ronde, le prêtre était là. Elle vendit la paroisse de St. Louis de Langevin avec la terre de l'église, sur laquelle était une chapelle en voie de construction; elle vendit la terre de l'école et les propriétés de trente-cinq familles. Est-il étonnant que les Métis se soient soulevés? Quelles gens, à leur place, n'en auraient pas fait autant?[3]

Riel had added that human patience has its limits. Such despotism and tyranny left the offended with no other alternative but to have recourse to the force of arms. R.E. Lamb emphasized the importance of this transaction as a source of discontent when he stated in his book entitled *Thunder in the North* that "the outstanding cause of protest was the activities of the Prince Albert Company."[4] And William Pearce, who was appointed by the Honourable Thomas White, Minister of the Interior, to investigate the causes of the Rebellion, acknowledged that one of the main sources of dissatisfaction had been the sale to speculators and colonization companies of land on which Métis farmers had resided for years.[5]

The uprising was crushed within two months at a cost to the government of over five million dollars. The Métis, whose lands were sold by the Canadian government to the Prince Albert Colonization Company, paid a heavy price to protect their homes according to Riel:

> La paroisse de St. Louis de Langevin que la Puissance avait vendue avec le monde comme on vend une terre avec le bétail, n'aura jamais dans l'avenir un plus grand droit de prendre les armes que cette fois-là. Deux de ces braves gens, Isidore Boyer et Swan, ont versé leur sang pour défendre tout ce que le foyer domestique a de sacré, il y a eu trois condamnés au cachot et sept ou huit de dispersés et d'expatriés. Voilà comment la Puissance civilise le Nord-Ouest depuis quinze ans.[6]

The Liberal opposition capitalized on this incident to embarrass the Macdonald government and score political points. On 6 July 1885, Edward Blake accused the Conservative government in Parliament of rewarding its supporters and friends at the expense of the *bona fide* settlers of St. Louis de Langevin. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition revealed to the members of the House of Commons that the party in power had sold to the Prince Albert Colonization Company a township occupied by approximately twenty-nine Métis families. Blake accused the government of refusing to grant the Métis surveys in river lots because of its agreement with the company.

> The company found the settlers there, and the settlers who hold these river lots held the key of the position. The company asked the Government, during the Session of 1884, to give them possession or to exchange for other vacant land, or to refund the money; but the Minister refused, saying the matter was in the company's hands, as they had the right and title to the land and could eject. They declined to eject, saying it would raise a rebellion, and the matter became more unsettled than ever. The agreement with the company and its title prevented the settlement by the Government of several claims of settlers on the tract, and amongst them are to be found several of the insurgents who fought in the different fights in the neighbourhood of Batoche.[7]

Debate on the disturbances in the North-West Territories continued with minor interruptions until 8 July. Wilfrid Laurier, Malcolm Colin Cameron, and Philippe Baby Casgrain made eloquent speeches before the House condemning the government for its failure to redress the claims of the Métis. On 9 July, Parliament defeated a motion presented by the Leader of the Opposition charging the government with mismanagement of the affairs of the North-West Territories by a vote of 105 to 49.[8]

Discussion of the Rebellion and the role played by the Prince Albert Colonization Company faded from the political arena following the defeat of Blake's motion but the Grit press continued to exploit this issue to censure the Macdonald government. *The Globe* (Toronto) and the *Manitoba Daily Free Press* repeatedly published lists of Métis residing in the parish of St. Louis de Langevin who had suffered extreme hardships as a result of the Rebellion. *The Globe* (Toronto) published a list of the most prominent investors and directors of the Prince Albert Colonization Company and illustrated their close affinity to influential members of the Macdonald ministry.[9] The editor of the *Manitoba Daily Free Press* asserted that "the dealings of the Government with the Prince Albert Colonization Company were reason alone sufficient to account for the Rebellion."[10]

In September 1885, internal dissension and ensuing judicial proceedings between members of the Prince Albert Colonization Company's executive provided the Liberal press with additional ammunition to pursue its attack. Evidence given under oath before the local Master in Chancery of Belleville in a case involving J.C. Jamieson, the secretary, and David Gilmour, the vice-president of the Prince Albert Colonization Company, partly substantiated the accusation Blake had made in Parliament on 6 July that John White, federal representative for East Hastings, and J.C. Jamieson, son-in-law of Mackenzie Bowell, had received "blind shares" in the company in return for their influence within the government. Questioned under oath, David Gilmour stated:

> It was supposed that Jamieson and White were not getting a 1/12 share [in the company][11] for nothing; it was for the influence they were to use; I had a big row about giving them that at the Windsor Hotel in Montreal without paying their money the same as I did; they were to work in our interests to use their influence with the Government. Jamieson gave everybody the impression that he had the inside track in Ottawa.[12]

David Gilmour further testified that secret meetings of the directors of the company and officials from the Department of the Interior were held in a room of the Parliament Buildings to discuss Métis occupation in the form of river lots of the most productive lands in the newly-acquired township. The company's representatives demanded a refund of their first installment; government officials refused, informing the company's directors that they held title to the land and could eject the half-breeds if they so desired.

Based upon the testimony of David Gilmour and other witnesses, the *Brockville Recorder*, a Liberal newspaper, concluded that the directors of the Prince Albert Colonization Company had employed underhanded tactics in an attempt to eject the half-breeds of St. Louis de Langevin from their lands, homes, and holdings.[13] *The Globe* (Toronto) and the *Manitoba Daily Free Press* persistently echoed the same charges against the Macdonald government and the Prince Albert Colonization Company. However, all three Liberal newspapers failed to substantiate their accusations. Father Vegreville, curé of St. Louis de Langevin, did not mention the Prince Albert Colonization Company in his letter to Chief Inspector of Surveys, Captain Deville, but he stressed that the government's reluctance to grant surveys in river lots compelled numerous half-breeds of his parish to abandon their farms.[14] How could the government rectify the Métis' grievances when it had previously surrendered its authority by granting to a company all rights and title to the lands under question? As David Gilmour testified, the company's associates had attempted to relinquish the township but the government had refused to grant them a refund.

Thus, as *The Globe* (Toronto) asserted, "the government was directly responsible for the crime of having, through the Prince Albert Colonization Company, provoked the half-breeds to rebellion."[15]

In a memorandum presented to the Honourable Hector Langevin, Minister of Public Works, the Chief Inspector of Surveys, Captain Deville, pointed out that legally the Prince Albert Colonization Company could not and did not eject the squatters residing on its lands and that furthermore, each half-breed farmer could have exacted $80.00 from the company by threatening to abandon his homestead. Deville insisted that the company would have preferred to give each Métis squatter $80.00 rather than lose its $160.00 rebate.[16] Deville obviously failed to take into consideration, or even to comprehend, the Métis' desire to hold land in river lots and the company's desire to relinquish its township owing to the presence of half-breeds occupying the choice lands in the form of river lots. Deville's solution would have satisfied neither party.

When a lull developed in the assaults launched by the Grit press against the Prince Albert Colonization Company, the issue made a climactic reappearance on the political scene. On 5 April 1886, J.D. Edgar, member for the electoral district of West Ontario, accused Mackenzie Bowell, Minister of Customs, of receiving monetary compensation from the Prince Albert Colonization Company for exercising his political influence within government circles.

> I am credibly informed and believe that I can establish by satisfactory evidence, that in the year 1882 John White, Esquire, then and now member for East Hastings, who was associated in the transaction with James C. Jamieson, of Belleville, journalist, used his influence with the Government of which he was a parliamentary supporter, to obtain and did obtain an Order in Council and an agreement for a grant, for colonization purposes, of 51,200 acres of choice lands near Batoche, in the North-West Territories, with the intention of trafficking with such grant, by the formation of a colonization company, the members of which should give the said White and Jamieson special advantages and profits in consideration of the procuring of the said order and agreement, and of assistance and promotion of the interests of the company in the past and in the future. Subsequently, they formed the company called the Prince Albert Colonization Company, and got the other shareholders to agree that for the said considerations each of them, Messrs White and Jamieson, should be entitled, without payment out of their own pocket of any money, to a free gift or bonus of one-twelfth part of the expected profits, which were estimated to be very great; and they each accordingly received what were called 'blind shares' to the amount of $33,000 nominal value, on which they were not to pay and did not pay any sum out of their own pockets to the company or otherwise than out of the expected profits, while the other shareholders were to pay and did pay their calls in cash, to the extent of $20,000 and upwards. The affair was conducted with the knowledge of the Honourable Mackenzie Bowell, then and

> now member for North Hastings, and Minister of Customs, the father-in-law and associate in business of the said James C. Jamieson; and Mr. Bowell was consulted during its progress, and when Mr. Jamieson ultimately sold his 'blind shares' Mr. Bowell received from Mr. Jamieson, upon some transaction between them relating to the affair, $500 of the price of the said 'blind shares.'[17]

Edgar proposed a select committee be appointed to enquire into the internal operations of the Prince Albert Colonization Company. Messrs J. White and M. Bowell wholeheartedly endorsed Edgar's proposal to exonerate themselves.

The issue was referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for investigation. The members of this committee, D'Alton McCarthy, Wilfrid Laurier, Charles Tupper, Robert Newton Hall of Sherbrooke, Charles Wesley Weldon of St. John, Louis Henry Davies of Prince Edward Island, Désiré Girouard of Jacques Cartier, James Colebrooke Patterson of Essex, and James Frederic Lister of West Lambton, were empowered to send for persons, papers, records and to examine witnesses under oath to verify Edgar's allegations. The committee of six Conservatives and three Liberals met for the first time on 9 April and held sporadic sessions until 4 May.

During the course of the investigation, the committee learned that John White and a former government surveyor by the name of Simpson were each granted one-twelfth interest in the Prince Albert Colonization Company,[18] the first for securing from the government a grant of 52,000 acres and the latter for choosing appropriate land in the North-West Territories. When Simpson requested $500.00 in cash instead of shares, J.C. Jamieson borrowed the money from his father-in-law, Mackenzie Bowell, and bought Simpson's one-twelfth share in the company. Jamieson repaid his loan of $500.00 to his father-in-law after selling his interests for $1,000.00 a year later. When Edgar failed to substantiate his allegations and obstinately refused to divulge his source of information regarding the accusations, the committee was adjourned without having detected any evidence against Mackenzie Bowell and J.C. Jamieson.[19]

The Liberal opposition and the Grit press attacked the Prince Albert Colonization Company primarily to embarrass the Conservative government. Louis Schmidt, Riel's secretary in 1869-70, later Conservative MLA in Manitoba and a resident of St. Louis de Langevin during the North-West Rebellion, claimed in his memoirs:

> Or, ces griefs ont été odieusement, sinon ridiculement exagérés par le parti libéral. Toute ces histoires de confiscations, de spoliations des habitants de Saint-Louis de Langevin (j'en suis du nombre) au profit de la Société de Colonisation de Prince-Albert n'ont pas le moindre fondement. Personne n'a été troublé ni menacé dans la possession de son lot de terre. La seule différence à ce sujet est que nous demandions des lots de rivière et que le gouvernment faisait la sourde oreille.[20]

The defamation of the Prince Albert Colonization Company's role as a settlement agent and the gross exaggeration of the part it played in events leading to the Rebellion injured the reputation of all colonization companies. The uprising and the spectacular news-reporting of this event in eastern newspapers brought settlement to a virtual halt. The number of entries for homesteads diminished from 3,753 in 1884 to approximately 1,858 in 1885.[21] This reduction in the number of settlers migrating to the Canadian West occasioned much distress for the already hard-pressed colonization companies.

A handful of immigrants settled on the tract of various colonization companies but the majority of these enterprises failed to record a single new entry. The directors of the Farmers' North-West Land Company complained that a group of sixty German farmers which they had enlisted, refused to homestead on their tracts as a result of the Rebellion and decided to settle in Manitoba.[22] Messrs. Vahey and Wilkinson, whose land grant lay north of Foam Lake, a short distance from the Yellow Quill Indian Reserve, stated in a letter addressed to the Prime Minister that settlers who had previously filed entry at Quill Plain, fearing for the safety of their families, now refused to occupy their homesteads. These Arkona, Ontario, residents insisted that further efforts on their part to promote the settlement of their township would be futile and would result only in wasted time and money.[23] A.T. Drummond, manager of the Montreal and Western Land Company, and the directors of the Edmonton and Saskatchewan Land Company avowed that the unfortunate Rebellion had jeopardized and practically destroyed the basis of their *raison d'être* by deterring settlement.[24] S.J. Brine, a settler destined for the Saskatchewan Land and Homestead's colony at Crescent Lake, exemplified the problems confronted by land company officials. He, along with forty-three prospective settlers, refused to migrate to the North-West Territories following the outbreak of the Métis Rebellion.[25]

While the colonization companies' hopes of survival suffered a mortal blow, the settlers homesteading company lands regarded the Rebellion as both a blessing and a curse. The uprising prevented the settlers, residing in the vicinity of Indian reserves or near the scene of warfare, from seeding their lands in the spring of 1885. Others, spurred by alarming rumours, decided to temporarily abandon their homesteads to seek refuge in major centres along the Canadian Pacific Railway line. Settlers who had ventured east to spend the winter months failed to return west when the press reported news of the insurrection. In some areas, the residents preferred to take up arms and face any possible eventuality rather than abandon their homes.

The Temperance Society, the Primitive Methodist Company, and the Saskatchewan Land and Homestead Company lost a handful of settlers who chose to remain in eastern Canada until law and order had been restored in the West. Although they refused to occupy their homesteads, they insisted that their entries be protected. Deprived of authority in such matters, land company officials forwarded these settlers' requests to the Minister of the Interior who, owing to the unusual circumstances, acceded to their demands for a leave of absence.

Colonists residing in the vicinity of an Indian reserve were in a constant state of anxiety; everyone feared that some dire calamity might befall them. The circulation of rumours, such as the imminent raid by Métis and

Indian forces, caused numerous "greenhorn" homesteaders to panic. Fearing a raid by the Cree Indians, the residents of the Saskatchewan Land and Homestead Company colony at Red Deer abandoned their farms and sought refuge in Calgary.[26] Several farmers located on the Edmonton and Saskatchewan Land Company tract at Clover Bar deserted their homes and sought safety for themselves and their stock in Fort Edmonton when rumours circulated that Indians from the surrounding area were converging on their isolated town.[27] The homesteaders in the Montreal and Western Land Company's tract panicked when a handful of half-breeds entered the colony overnight and stole horses belonging to the company and the local postmaster. This event seemed to substantiate rumours that the half-breeds would raid Kinbrae within a fortnight and prompted the settlers to dispatch a wire to General Middleton: "Settlers in dread, having no protection. Colony raided by half-breeds, four horses stolen and other injuries threatened. Please send assistance at once."[28] Although the colonists suffered few bodily injuries or material losses through Indian pillaging or raids, the circulation of wild and frightening rumours, heightened by vivid imaginations, caused them considerable distress.

With the outbreak of the Rebellion in the North-West Territories, the panic-stricken residents of Yorkton and the surrounding area dispatched James Armstrong, the managing director of the company, to the nation's capital to request protection against the Indians of the neighbouring reserves who were in a defiant mood. He was referred to A.P. Caron, Minister of Militia, who commanded Major W.T. Watson to proceed to Yorkton at once. Major Watson, accompanied by Sergeant Major G. Gardiner, left Ottawa on 3 April and reached Yorkton nine days later. He promptly organized a military brigade of sixty-three men, homesteaders from the Yorkton and Crescent Lake colonies, issued twenty rounds of ammunition and a rifle to each volunteer, and, with the assistance of these settlers, erected an eight-foot stockade one hundred and fifty feet square. As a further means of security, a ditch four feet deep and six feet wide was dug around the stockade. The Yorkton citizens' fears of an all-out offensive by the Indians of the neighbouring reserves never materialized but the Indians, particularly those of Chief Little Bones's band, plundered settlers' homes, stole horses, slaughtered cattle, and held nightly pow-wows on the shores of Lake Yorkton. The situation became so alarming that homesteaders from the outlying districts took refuge in the stone flour mill or in settlers' homes bordering Fort Watson.[29] While open warfare was raging north of Batoche, Chief Little Bones and his entire tribe marched into Yorkton and demanded food; Major Watson complied with their request and handed them five bags of flour.[30] The Indians left peacefully, but had the homesteaders not been armed, starvation might have induced the Indians to reject Major Watson's meager handout and plunder the town. Shortly after the Métis were subdued, the enlisted homesteaders were dismissed, each volunteer receiving scrip valued at $160.00 as a reward for coming to the defense of his community. Yorkton, whose peaceful existence had been disrupted by Indian depredations, returned to normal.

Of all the colonies in the Canadian West, Saskatoon, owing to its geographical position was definitely the most vulnerable. Situated only a short distance from the troubled area, the residents of this settlement were naturally deeply involved in the actual Rebellion. Bordered on the south by Whitecap's Sioux tribe and on the west, although at a much greater distance, by Chief Big Bear's Reserve, threatened with extinction by the leader of the insurrectionists, Louis Riel,[31] the settlers of the Temperance colony feared a union between Whitecap, Big Bear, and the Métis with themselves located in the centre of warlike activities. Everyone realized that Whitecap's warriors were growing rapidly more restive, and constant rumours had both Poundmaker and Big Bear converging on Saskatoon to wipe it off the map. The worried colonists held a number of meetings to discuss plans for the protection of women and children and means of reaching Moose Jaw to replenish their depleted supply of ammunition. Two men were designated to brave the hostile Sioux Indians and tread their way to Moose Jaw to procure five cases of Lee-Enfield rifles and twenty thousand rounds of ammunition.[32] The remaining available men guarded the banks of the South Saskatchewan River against a surprise attack by Big Bear's warriors and patrolled the southern trail leading into town from the Sioux Moose Woods Reserve.

Before William Horn and his companion returned from Moose Jaw, the settlers' dread of the scalping knife reached a peak when the sentries spotted the Sioux, feared for the warlike reputation they had acquired in the United States, advancing toward the settlement. After brief discussions with the leaders of the colony, Chief Whitecap, who still commanded sufficient respect to prevent his restless warriors from laying siege to Saskatoon, led his followers around the town and pursued his trail north to Batoche without molesting a single settler.[33] The residents of the Temperance colony had survived their first test of courage, but their trials and tribulations had just begun.

Saskatoon was still threatened by the Métis who were waging a successful war in the Batoche area. The settlers breathed a sigh of relief when General Middleton reached Clarke's Crossing on 20 April. To protect their homes, many homesteaders enlisted and a volunteer brigade was organized under the command of Dr. Willoughby. Four days later, the Canadian militia and the Métis clashed at Fish Creek, approximately forty miles north of the Temperance colony. The wounded were conveyed to the nearest settlement, Saskatoon, housed in the schoolhouse and settlers' homes and entrusted to the care of Dr. Willoughby and Brigade Surgeon Orton. As another clash with the Métis seemed imminent, General Middleton and Dr. James Bell decided to establish a field hospital designed to accommodate fifty individuals in Saskatoon. Dr. Roddick, deputy-surgeon general, was transferred from Moose Jaw to the Temperance colony to assume responsibility for the thirty-nine men wounded at Fish Creek. On 14 May, thirty-seven additional soldiers wounded in the battle of Batoche reached Saskatoon on the steamer *Northcote*. The hospital remained in operation until 3 July when the wounded were put aboard the steamer *Alberta* and conveyed to Winnipeg.[34]

The Rebellion greatly altered the daily routine of Saskatoon's residents. Owing to the shortage of qualified nurses, local women volunteered to assist the doctors and to provide meals for the soldiers recuperating in settlers' homes. The men were engaged in freighting supplies for troops along the Moose Jaw trail, scouting and intelligence work for General

Middleton, restoring telegraph service by splicing the lines damaged by the rebels between Clarke's Crossing and Humboldt, piloting the steamers on the South Saskatchewan River, and operating the telegraph at Clarke's Crossing. The insurrection transformed the Temperance colony into a beehive of military activity and precluded the seeding of a crop that year.

The advantages the colonists secured offset, to some extent, the losses they incurred during the Rebellion. The government's military expenditures during the insurrection afforded the colonists valuable cash. The settlers found profitable employment as guides, teamsters, linesmen, and messengers; they secured a lucrative market for their agricultural products; and received scrip valued at $160.00 which they could apply on their pre-emption following their dismissal from the militia. In addition, the government absorbed the cost of improving several trails leading from the railway to the scene of warlike activities which the local settlers used for years to come. To many settlers, the Riel Rebellion proved to be a real bonanza. A poem entitled, *A Nor'-Wester's Oration on Louis Riel*, which appeared in the *Qu'Appelle Vidette*, expounded on the benefits enjoyed by the homesteaders.

> Friends! Fellow-countrymen! Lend me your ears;
> I come to speak of Riel — not to praise him.
> The evil that he did, ye all remember;
> The good to the Northwest ye have forgot.
> Now, listen well to me. The noble Dewdney
> Hath told you that Louis is a rebel;
> If it is so, it is a serious fault.
> And if it is proved, Riel should swing.
> Here, under leave of Dewdney and the rest
> Come I to speak on Louis Riel's behalf.
> He was your friend, he brought you cash.
> Through him were many teams hired
> The cash from which your pockets filled with bills.
> When that the farmer cried, 'I am undone,
> My wheat is frozen,' then Riel rebelled,
> And saved you all. Was not this opportune?[35]

Innocent bystanders and members of both warring factions who had sustained losses as a result of the uprising could appeal to the government for indemnification. On 25 February 1886, the Macdonald ministry voted an order in council instituting a commission, chaired by J. Alphonse Ouimet, to review and, whenever deemed advisable, award monetary compensation to the applicants. The members of the commission, J.A. Ouimet of Montréal, Thomas McKay of Prince Albert and Henry Muma of Drumbo, Ontario, were appointed to probe the validity of the various claims before dispensing public funds to offset the sufferer's losses.[36] Among the claimants, at least nine, and probably many more, resided in one of the colonization companies' tracts. Gerald Willoughby of Saskatoon requested the sum of $425.17 for the rental of his home, the loss of his stove, and the freighting of goods for the Canadian militia.[37] For the use of his home, the provision of wood, and the conveying of messages, J.F. Clarke of Clarke's Crossing in the Temperance colony solicited and received the sum of $155.00.[38] William Sharples, brother-in-law to the Minister of the Militia and the recipient of two townships situated near the present town of Outlook, Saskatchewan, under the Land Regulations of 23 December 1881, was awarded the sum of $1,616.00 by the War Claims Commission for freighting part of the Alberta Field Force during the insurrection.[39] Seven homesteaders claimed retroactive pay of fifty to seventy-five cents per day, according to rank, for their participation in the Yorkton militia. John F. Reid, a settler in the Yorkton colony and a member of the volunteer brigade, received the additional sum of $13.75 for serving meals to enlisted soldiers.[40] A.H. Minhinnick, a settler from the Montreal colony, who failed to substantiate his claim before the members of the commission, appealed to the Minister of the Interior seeking compensation for the loss of his horse and harness, but to no avail.[41] Thus the influx of capital dispensed by government troops and the War Claims Commission gave the residents of the various colonies a new lease on life.

In the end, there were both winners and losers as a result of the Rebellion. The government found a pretext to justify the failure of its settlement policies even though the influx of settlers had started to decline in 1884 after having reached a peak in 1883. The Conservatives exaggerated the impact of the Rebellion on settlement as much as the Liberals exaggerated the impact of the sale of St. Louis de Langevin to the Prince Albert Colonization Company on the events which prompted the Métis to rebel. Using the same rhetoric as government spokesmen, the owners of colonization companies exploited the Rebellion to secure from the government a favourable settlement of their ill-fated gamble. The Rebellion turned out to be a blessing for the land company investors who had been seeking a way out of their contracts long before the outbreak of violence. The settlers admittedly experienced anxious moments during the Rebellion, but this anxiety was amply compensated by the provision of employment in some cases and the infusion of much needed capital in the Territories as a whole. The only real losers as a result of the Rebellion were the Métis.

NOTES

1 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 6 July 1885, Copy of the petition, 3107.

2 Ibid., Copy of Father Vegreville's letter, 3108.

3 *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, 4 December 1885; extract from an article entitled, "The Rebellion as Told by Riel," printed in *The Montreal Star*. Also Louis Riel, "Dernier mémoire de Louis Riel" in A. Ouimet and B.A.T. de Montigny, *Riel: la vérité sur la question métisse* (Montréal: Deschez, 1889), 81.

4 R.E. Lamb, *Thunder in the North* (New York: Pageant Press, 1959), 183. Lamb states on page 207 of the same work that defense lawyer Greenshields maintained during the trial of Riel that "the Metis had been understandably aroused by the appearance and activities in their country of speculators, land-grabbers, and colonization companies." A thorough review of Riel's trial as published in the *Ses-*

sional Papers, 1886, vol. 43c, has failed to produce any evidence to support Lamb's statement.

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13 *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, 23 September 1885; quotation from the *Brockville Recorder*.

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31 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1886, vol. 43c, (Testimony of Dr. Willoughby at the trial of Louis Riel), 56.

32 J.H. Archer, "The History of Saskatoon" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1948), 38.

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36 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1888, vol. 14, (Department of the Interior's Annual Report), xxvi.

37 *Report of the War Claims Commission*, Ottawa, 1886, 102.

38 Ibid., 153.

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The Rise and Fall of Louis Riel and the Métis Nation: An Anthropological Account

Paul Driben

Despite a century of hindsight, no interpretation of Louis Riel and the Métis Nation satisfies everyone. Historians, for instance, hold a variety of views. Some, such as W.L. Morton, see Riel as a national hero who

> challenged Quebec to play a positive part in Confederation, to maintain French institutions throughout Canada and not merely in Quebec. He challenged Ontario to recognize that the dual character of Canadian nationality was not a temporary concession to necessity, but the foundation and framework of the federation. Riel, in short, forced the new Dominion to consider the full implications of the work of Confederation, and he demonstrated that Canada was not to be governed, as the North-West was not to be annexed, without the co-operation of French and English Canadians.[1]

As for the Métis, Morton wrote that they possessed "a civilized society, largely of mixed white and Indian blood, it is true, but civilized by every test except that of self-government; and that test in no forced sense of the word it could also meet."[2]

Other historians have taken a different approach: the Métis are depicted as a "primitive" nation with an albeit fascinating, but equally "primitive," leader. For example, according to Stanley:

> Louis Riel was not a great man; he was not even what Carlyle would call a near great. Nevertheless he became, in death, one of the most decisive figures of our history. By historical accident rather than by design he became the symbol of divisions as old as the Franco-British struggle for the control of North America. It is this historical accident which has obscured the fundamental character of the two risings which bear Riel's name; for the Riel 'rebellions' were not what the politicians argued and what the people believed, a continuation on the banks of the Red and Saskatchewan of the traditional hostilities of old Canada. They were, instead, the typical, even inevitable results of the advance of the frontier, the last organized attempts on the part of Canada's primitive peoples to withstand what, for want of a better word, may be termed progress, and to preserve their culture and identity against the encroachment of civilization.[3]

Still others have not been as kind as Morton and Stanley. To them Riel and the Métis were the cutthroat dupes of the French Canadian Catholic church. In a story that appeared in *The* (Toronto) *Daily Telegraph* in 1869, the Métis were described as "nothing more than a mob of disaffected half-breeds, who are, without doubt, merely the agents of interested parties, who have not the courage to appear."[4] The historian Chester Martin has described Riel and the Métis in much the same way.

> The Metis [he wrote], suspicious and unenlightened, were easily moved to something more than passive resistance beneath the vainglorious leadership of Louis Riel — a resistance which on more than one occasion passed beyond control and finally degenerated into wanton arrogance and bloodshed. The brains of the movement, however, were not those of Louis Riel; and it would not be unjust ... to regard the Metis as the secular arm of the [Catholic] Church at Red River.[5]

One of the most fascinating and frustrating things about these interpretations is that none is necessarily incorrect. There is no absolute truth about Riel and the Métis, only a set of facts that can be interpreted in a variety of ways.[6] So it is not the facts about Riel and the Métis that are in dispute, but rather the meaning of the facts as determined by the concepts the analyst employs. For example, to say that Riel was a Métis leader is a fact. To say that his leadership was heroic, mediocre, or negligent is to give the fact meaning through the use of historical terms. Likewise, to say that the Métis were French-speaking Catholic half-breeds who were in conflict with the Canadian government is also a fact. To say that the conflict indicates that their culture was civilized, primitive, or savage is once again an example of interpreting facts in historical terms.

Nor must only one interpretation prevail. As long as the facts are not distorted, our intellectual understanding of Riel and the Métis is enhanced to the extent that a variety of explanations exist. Perry put it this way: "Whosoever determines what alternatives shall be made known to man controls what man shall choose from. He is deprived of freedom in proportion as he is denied access to any ideas or is confined to any range of possibilities short of the totality of relevant possibilities."[7]

Keeping this in mind, the goal of this paper is to offer another interpretation of the facts about Riel and the Métis. It relies on the use of two anthropological concepts. One is purchase society, a term introduced by Mary Helms. The other is revitalization movement, a concept developed by A.F.C. Wallace. Both shed new light not only on the nature of the Riel resistances, but on the events that caused them to occur.

Conceptual Framework

According to Helms, purchase societies are like peasant societies in that they are found "on the economic frontiers of both agrarian and industrial states."[8] But that is as far as the similarity goes, for "unlike peasantry, purchase societies are not enmeshed in the political controls characteristic of agrarian states. Instead, ... their involvement with a wider society is characterized ... solely by engagement in trade or wage labor to obtain items of foreign manufacture ..."[9] Thus, purchase societies owe no formal political allegiance to the societies with which they trade; rather, they have an economic surplus that they exchange for items they do not manufacture themselves.

Of course, purchase societies are subject to change, and one of the ways they can change is through a revitalization movement. Such movements originate during periods of social disorganization and cultural stress, and are "deliberate, organized, conscious effort[s] by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture."[10] Equally important, although revitalization movements vary according to local historical circumstance, there is enough similarity between them to suggest a functional sequence of events.

The most thorough analysis of the sequence has been presented by A.F.C. Wallace.[11] According to Wallace a revitalization movement consists of five stages or periods which may or may not occur in the following temporal order.

During the first stage, called the *steady state*, social and cultural forces exist in a dynamic equilibrium. Culture change takes place in a slow and orderly fashion, maintaining the integrity of the society and keeping personal levels of stress well within tolerable limits.

The second stage is known as the *period of increased individual stress*. It occurs when the cultural system can no longer satisfy the needs of its members. This happens when the system is pushed out of equilibrium because of an epidemic, invasion, or some other disruptive force.

The third stage, the *period of cultural distortion*, is marked by ineffective and piecemeal attempts to reduce stress and restore equilibrium to the system. Special interest groups may try to set the system aright, but efforts usually lead to more disorganization and stress.

The fourth stage is the *period of revitalization*. It takes place once people realize their culture is maladaptive. But success is not always guaranteed; instead, it depends on the completion of a number of tasks. First, a code must be formulated that proposes a blueprint for a better society. Second, the code must be communicated to win converts. Third, the converts must be organized into disciples and followers. Fourth, the movement must be defended by modifying the code or, if necessary, by force. Fifth, a cultural transformation must take place so that the "new" blueprint culture replaces the "old" maladaptive one. Finally, the movement must be routinized so that the new culture establishes its own methods for handling change.

The last stage is known as the *new steady state*. This occurs when social disorganization and personal stress return to tolerable levels, and a new dynamic equilibrium is restored.

From the above it can be deduced that a purchase society will remain in a steady state as long as there is no threat to its political autonomy, its trade goods are in demand, and there is an adequate supply of the goods. Otherwise, there is the possibility that the society will become involved in a revitalization movement, particularly if all three conditions change at or near the same moment in time. In retrospect, this appears to have been the case with the Métis in both 1869-70 and in 1885, although there were significant differences in the nature of the revitalizations in those years.

The Métis as Purchasers

That the Métis were a purchase society is indicated by a number of facts. True, the District of Assiniboia was under the *de jure* political control of the Hudson's Bay Company, but there are reasons to believe that the Métis were exempt from such control. One of the best indications occurred long before Louis Riel became a Métis leader, when Cuthbert Grant and his followers defied Governor Miles Macdonell's 1814 "Pemmican Proclamation," and two years later killed Governor Semple and twenty of his men.[12]

In 1849 the Métis demonstrated their political power again after Guillaume Sayer and three other Métis, McGillis, Larone, and Goulet, were arrested for illegally trafficking in furs.

> Sayer and the other Metis had been freed on bail. The trial was fixed for 17 May 1849. The Metis believed the choice of this day – the Feast of Ascension – was deliberate and that attendance at Mass would prevent appearance at the trial.
>
> Adam Thom, Recorder of the Council of Assiniboia, a Hudson's Bay Company appointee and employee, was to conduct the trial . . . [However, after attending] early Mass at St. Boniface . . . [h]undreds of boisterous men gathered outside the court-house at Fort Garry . . .
>
> Sayer pleaded guilty. However Thom, probably acting as directed by the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company who realized they could not enforce their rulings, saved face for his employers by ruling that the complicity of an agent of the Company in Sayer's "crime" provided grounds for dismissal.[13]

Yet another, and perhaps the best indication that the Métis were exempt from the *de jure* political control of the Hudson's Bay Company came from Sir George Simpson, governor-in-chief of Rupert's Land and general superintendent of the Hudson's Bay Company in North America, who, in 1856, admitted in a letter that "[t]he Company's rights are treated by the ... Half-breeds as fictions of law which we cannot and dare not attempt to enforce, and in our present position this is correct."[14]

The economy of the Red River Métis was also that of a purchase society. It was based primarily on two great communal buffalo hunts, the first in June and the second in either September or October. The preparations were elaborate. According to Howard:

> About June 1 the "Plains mania" seized the Red River Metis. The tasks on the home place were assigned to the elderly and infirm, the hunters tinkered with their gear and dickered with the [Hudson's Bay] Company for credit with which to buy supplies, the wives worked into the night repairing utensils and tents and making clothing. Leaders of the expedition waited upon the Bishop of St. Boniface and respectfully requested that he assign a priest to accompany the people. Meanwhile the Anglo-Saxon farmers watched primly, deplored "casting off the habits of industry to go to the prairies," blind to the fact that in the week of preparation for this mass movement and two months on the Plains the Metis did more work than the farmers did in a year, and braved more hardship than the farmers did in a lifetime.[15]

Adding to the excitement was the magnitude of the hunt. For example, the June hunt of 1840, which Howard states "was typical of these Metis mass expeditions ... engaged 620 hunters, 650 women and 360 children for two months, requiring 1,210 carts, about the same number of draught animals, and 403 hunting horses.[16]

By the middle of November most of the Métis had returned to the settlement. After they had distributed a share of the hunt to relatives who had stayed behind, the hunters began a brisk trade with Europeans. First they repayed their debt to the Hudson's Bay Company — the financial backer of the hunts who, "according to usual custom, issued a notice that it would take a certain specified quantity of provisions, not from each fellow that had been at the plains, but from each old and recognized hunter."[17]

Later, trade began in earnest with the European settlers who were usually in dire need of food. Between 1812 and 1868 crop failures were common, and this made the Métis hunts all that much more important.[18]

However, in 1868 Métis society underwent a drastic change. As W.L. Morton has explained:

> What actually happened was that in 1868 the Settlement was threatened by famine. Grasshoppers ruined the crops; the buffalo hunts failed; the fisheries failed; even rabbits and other game disappeared, or were scarce. The periodic shortages of provisions in Red River had affected the less provident of the population in the past; but in 1868 all but the most fortunate were affected by actual want, or by the consequent high prices of provisions. It was this breakdown of the traditional economy of the Settlement, as much as the transfer in the following year that marked the end of the old order in the North-West.[19]

Nor could the Métis hope to recapture their former economic and political strength; the Dawson Trail foreshadowed an end to their once dominant role.

The Red River Resistance

Clearly, the structure of traditional Métis society had been seriously if not totally undermined, and this was enough to encourage the Métis to try, as Wallace has said, "to construct a more satisfying culture" through revitalization.[20] In fact, one of the most striking things about the Resistance of 1869-70 is how closely it fits the sequence.

Take the case of the emergence of special interest groups. According to Creighton, one such group was composed of "American agents"

> [whose] aim was nothing less than the annexation of all or part of the British north-west to the United States; and they were well and strategically placed for the work they had in hand ... Back of them all was the government of the United States ... which viewed the whole north-west with an interested and acquisitive eye. From the start the American government was very curious about the troubles at the Red River; and it appointed J.W. Taylor, the greatest authority in the United States on the British north-west, as a secret agent to keep the

> State Department informed about the development of the affair.[21]

Although each had its own objectives, the Canadian government, the British government, and the Hudson's Bay Company were also keenly interested in the future of the North-West. "Canada wanted Britain to buy the West [from the Hudson's Bay Company] and present it to the Dominion. Britain showed no enthusiasm for the idea. The company raised a further obstacle when it insisted on retaining a substantial amount of fertile land as part of any agreement."[22]

The Catholic Church was interested in the agreement as well. In "1869 Bishop Tache was in Quebec, where he attempted ... to convince members of the Government that their policy in Rupert's Land would bring about a fatal collision with the Metis."[23] According to Lalonde, what the Church wanted was "a minimum of fifteen more years to reach and solidify its objectives: convince the Metis to abandon the hunt and opt for a more sedentary way of life by cultivating the soil; educate and Frenchify the members of their flock; and imbue them with the precepts of the Roman Catholic faith. Then and only then could the clergy rish [*sic*] exposing its flock to the different concepts and values brought in by the anticipated influx of materialistically orientated Anglo-Saxon Protestant settlers from Ontario."[24]

The "Canadian Party," whose prime mover in the Red River settlement was Dr. John C. Schultz, was equally concerned about the future. "This group, known later by the slogan 'Canada First,' had strongly favoured the acquisition of the North-West by Canada, and its members followed events in Red River with an interest scarcely shared by Canadians in the Maritimes, Quebec, or even Ontario. This interest was stimulated by the knowledge that the United States had its eyes on the west, and by the conviction that the North-West was Canada's natural hinterland, with Canadian associations going back beyond the English regime to the days of La Verendrye."[25]

Still other special interest groups included the Native people in the area — the English-speaking half-breeds, the Métis, and the Indians. As Stanley has pointed out:

> Although the two half-breed groups had much in common, there were strong differences between them. The language of their fathers was obviously different: but there were other differences - religion and temperament - differences emphasized by the fact that each group tended to live in its own region in the colony ... This geographical separation was assisted in part by the clergy ... Each religious denomination, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian, sought to isolate its own parishioners in order to minister more effectively to their spiritual needs.[26]

As for the Indians, their interest in the area had been established by the *Royal Proclamation of 1763*, something the Hudson's Bay Company apparently recognized when it included the following proviso in the deed that transferred Rupert's Land to Canada: "Any claims of Indians to compensation for lands required for purposes of settlement shall be disposed of by the Canadian Government in communication with the Imperial Government; and the [Hudson's Bay] Company shall be relieved of all responsibility in respect of them."[27]

The glaring differences between the interests and objectives of these groups threw the Red River Settlement into an uproar. But what emerged was not a series of haphazard or unrelated events, at least not from an anthropological perspective. Instead, in Wallace's terms, the settlement entered the fourth stage of a revitalization movement — the *period of revitalization* — in which Louis Riel and the Métis took the leading role.

For instance, one of the identifying features of the *period of revitalization* is a code that proposes a blueprint for a better society. The Métis version was a "List of Rights" that was published in the name of the National Committee of the Métis of the Red River on 4 December 1869. It proposed a number of rights, among them "[t]he right to elect a [local] legislature ... [t]he right to approve or reject ... Dominion legislation which directly affected the Territory ... [t]reaties with the Indians ... [and the u]se of French and English ... in the legislature, in all public documents, and by judges of the Superior Court."[28] Four days later, on 8 December 1869, the Métis published the "Declaration of the People of Rupert's Land," which insisted "that a people, when it has no Government, is free to adopt one form of Government in preference to another, to give or to refuse allegiance to that which is proposed."[29]

The code was also publicized to attract followers, primarily although not exclusively by Louis Riel. By all accounts Riel was a charismatic speaker who was capable of attracting large crowds. More than one thousand people attended a meeting he appeared at on 19 January 1870 to listen to Donald Smith explain Canada's future plans for the settlement, despite the fact that the meeting lasted five hours in -25°F weather. The next day an even larger crowd heard Riel's reply in the same freezing temperature, attracted to the meeting by both Riel and the clergy.[30] The Métis also used a newspaper to publicize their views — *The New Nation* — which printed its first issue on 7 January 1870.[31]

In the meantime, considerable effort had gone into organizing the movement. On 16 October 1869 the National Committee of the Métis was formed — President John Bruce and Secretary Louis Riel; between 16 and 24 November 1869 a convention was held to elect delegates to discuss the formation of a provisional government; on 27 November 1869 the structure of a provisional government was agreed upon; on 27 December 1869 the National Committee of the Métis was dissolved and a provisional government was installed; on 27 January 1870 Riel was named the president of the provisional government; and on 26 February 1870 English-speaking representatives were elected to the new government.[32]

Yet another task that was undertaken during this period was the defense of the code. This was accomplished partly by modifying the "List of Rights" in accord with "Riel's anxiety to protect the lands, the local customs, the usages and languages of the people of his native country."[33]

Force, however, was the main tool that was used to defend the code. In a series of staccato-like events the following actions were undertaken: on 11 October 1869 Riel and fifteen unarmed Métis stopped a party of Canadian surveyors working at André Nault's farm. Only ten days later "Riel and several hundred armed Metis rode south along the Pembina Trail ten miles to the small village of St. Norbert. Here Riel erected a large wooden cross and placed a heavy barrier across the trail, blocking off the only entry into the Settlement from the south. All passengers were searched, mail was censored, and the long line of freight carts examined and their contents often confiscated."[34] Then, on 2 November 1869, fourteen armed Métis ordered William McDougall, who had been appointed lieutenant-governor of the new territory by Prime Minister Macdonald, "not to enter the Territory of the Northwest without special permission of ... [the National Committee of the Metis of Red River]."[35] On the same day Riel and four hundred followers captured Fort Garry, and later Dr. Schultz and forty-seven others were imprisoned. But by far the most celebrated use of force was the execution of Thomas Scott, which took place on 4 March 1870.

The code had been defended. All that remained was for a cultural transformation to take place and the new blueprint culture to be installed. But this did not happen; instead, Canadian troops prevented the execution of these last two critical tasks and the period of revitalization was brought to an abrupt halt.

The 1885 Resistance

Fifteen years later came the Saskatchewan Resistance, which, from an anthropological perspective, varied significantly from its predecessor, although not in terms of its causes. Once again the Métis' role as purchasers was threatened. As Giraud has pointed out:

> On the morrow of the Insurrection of 1885, the metis had but a very poor future in prospect. The certainty of being miserable in a country whose economic transformations were making it foreign to them, and the discouragement which was being brought about in them by the occupation of a territory over which they had for so long considered themselves masters, were now accompanied by an apprehension of new reprisals.[36]

The results of the resistance were also the same in the sense that the Métis were unable to establish a new and better social order.

What was different about the two resistances was Louis Riel. According to Flanagan: "He played only a political role in 1869-70. Although he was a loyal member of the Roman Catholic Church, his chief concerns were political, not religious. But by 1875 he conceived himself as more of a prophet than a politician."[37] Further, "[h]e began to think that his mission was to break with Rome, to establish on the soil of the New World a successor to the Catholic Church, which had lost its spiritual vitality."[38]

What makes this interesting from an anthropological view is that Riel's seemingly abberant behaviour is entirely consistent with the revitalization process. In surveys of revitalizations the world over Wallace has detected some important variations in the process. For instance, while some movements emphasize the revival of a traditional culture, others are more concerned with importing a foreign culture, or adopting a new utopian one. Movements can also select either secular or religious means to accomplish their goals. Finally, leadership varies inasmuch as the aims of the movement can be professed by a single spokesperson — the culture hero or prophet — or by a group.[39]

In retrospect, then, it seems that the differences between the two resistances were in leadership, goals, and in the ultimate aim of the movement itself. In 1869-70, Riel shared his leadership role with others, secular means were selected to achieve the movement's goals, and the ultimate aim was to revive the old purchase society of the Métis. But in 1885, Riel's leadership was paramount, the means he selected to achieve the movement's goals were religious, and his ultimate aim was to establish a new utopian culture.

Conclusion

Like other interpretations of the rise and fall of Louis Riel and the Métis nation the preceding analysis cannot be regarded as the absolute truth. It is worth repeating that there is no truth about Riel and the Métis; only a set of facts that can be explained in a variety of ways. Hopefully, the concepts that I have employed will encourage others to rethink their positions. In the final analysis Stanley put it best: "I thought I knew all the answers: now that I know more about Riel, I am less certain what the answers are."[40]

NOTES

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2 Ibid., 2-3.

3 G.F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel: Patriot or Rebel?* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1974), 24. Similar interpretations have been proposed by Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Metis People* (Toronto: J. Lewis and Samuel, 1974), and by D. Bruce Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier, *The Metis: Canada's Forgotten People* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Metis Federation Press, 1975).

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5 Chester Martin, "The First 'New Province' of the Dominion," *The Canadian Historical Review* 1 (1920): 367. See also Donald Creighton, "The 1860's," in J.M.S. Careless and Craig Brown, eds., *The Canadians, 1867-1967* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1967), 44ff.

6 As Frankel has pointed out: "despite the fact that the historian is primarily concerned with making singular statements, it is misleading to believe that explanation in history is radically different from explanation in other fields. In the first place, there are many natural sciences such as geology, for example, which are also predominantly concerned with discovering individual occurrences that have taken place at some particular place and time; and even generalizing sciences like physics have, after all, an inescapable reference to *this* world as it happens contingently to shape up, and not to any possible world ... These and other considerations, such as the obvious one that history has to be written in such a language, and that any

language must contain general terms, would seem to suggest that historical explanation, like causal explanations in other fields, involves an at least implicit appeal to regularities and recurrences, and is similar in its fundamental logic to explanations anywhere else." Charles Frankel, "Explanation and Interpretation in History" in Patrick Gardiner, ed., *Theories of History* (New York: Free Press, 1959), 410. See also May Brodbeck, ed., *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), 3-6.

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8 Mary W. Helms, "The Purchase Society; Adaptation to Economic Frontiers," *Anthropological Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (1969): 325.

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11 See Ibid., 268-75.

12 See Margaret MacLeod and W.L. Morton, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974).

13 Peter Charlebois, *The Life of Louis Riel* (Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1975), 18.

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15 Howard, *Strange Empire*, 258.

16 Ibid., 259.

17 Alexander Ross quoted in Sprenger, 74.

18 Ibid., 78-86.

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20 Wallace, "Revitalization," 265.

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26 Ibid., 8.

27 Quoted in Peter A. Cumming and Neil H. Mickenberg, eds., *Native*

Rights in Canada 2nd ed. (Toronto: Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, 1972), 32.

28 Howard, *Strange Empire*, 130–31.

29 Ibid., 155.

30 Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 88–90.

31 Howard, *Strange Empire*, 160.

32 Charlebois, *Life*, 249–50.

33 Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 93.

34 R.W.W. Robertson, *The Execution of Thomas Scott* (Toronto: Burns and MacEachern, 1968), 18.

35 John Bruce and Louis Riel quoted in Ibid., 19.

36 Marcel Giraud, "The Western Metis After the Insurrection," *Saskatchewan History* 9, no. 1 (1956): 1.

37 Thomas Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 28.

38 Ibid., 73. See also Ken Hatt, "Louis Riel as a Charismatic Leader," in A.S. Lussier, ed., *Louis Riel and the Metis* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1979), 23–30.

39 Wallace, "Revitalization," 275–78.

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1885: Métis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?

Donald McLean

Canadian historians have never sufficiently explained the seemingly irrational actions of the Métis who became so desperate as to engage in an impossible armed struggle against the overwhelming forces of the federal government during the 1885 uprising. This is because historians have focussed largely on the personality of Louis Riel, the man seen as the "cause" of the Rebellion, rather than on the policies of the federal government. These policies marginalized the Métis as a people, as the federal government expanded its sphere of control across the North-West Territories throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.

There can be little doubt that it was federal government policy that led to the armed conflict between the Métis and Canadian troops in the early spring of 1885.[1] The federal government of that period had a clear and unambiguous role to play in the colonization of the West. The government was, quite simply, the instrument by which the wealthy merchants and industrialists of the Canadian East institutionalized their economic control over the people of the agrarian West.[2] From 1867 to 1885, the federal government concentrated on providing both the necessary legislation and the military muscle to ensure that the West would be developed in accordance with the specific economic needs of Canada's national state apparatus as it developed within the framework of British imperialism.[3]

The creation of the agrarian West as an internal colony to be systematically exploited by Canada's developing capitalist class was necessary for the continued survival and growth of Canada as a nation.[4] Within this framework, the primary tasks of the federal government prior to 1885 were as follows:

> 1) to make treaties with the Indians and issue scrip to the Métis of the West, so as to make lands available to Canadian banks and speculators;
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> 2) to act as a mediator between the conflicting élites so that a transcontinental railway could be constructed largely at public expense;
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> 3) to provide the police and the military power that would be necessary for the social control of people living in the western colony;
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> 4) to enact legislation that would entrench the high tariffs on farm machinery, and institutionalize the monopoly control of the eastern industrialists over the western agricultural colony;

5) to bring in immigrant farmers from Europe and eastern Canada to act as producers for the new wheat economy.

In the beginning a substantial military force was required in the Canadian West so that treaties could be made with the Indian tribes.[5] This was the necessary first step towards the implementation of the Canadian Policy. Although the North West Mounted Police were legitimately required to keep law and order in the West, their fundamental purpose was to provide the necessary coercive power to ensure that treaties could be successfully negotiated with the Plains tribes. Furthermore, the larger the police force in any given region, the harder the bargaining became with the Indian tribes involved in the treaty negotiations.[6] But a coercive military presence was also required by the Canadian state for the social control of the Métis, half-breeds, and white settlers, who were correctly seen by Sir John A. Macdonald, the prime minister, as potential troublemakers.[7]

Of these groups, the Métis represented the strongest threat to the federal government. Indeed, government functionaries in the West knew they had the potential to unite the traditionally warring tribes of the plains into a common struggle against the policies of the federal government.[8] Nor could the white settlers be expected to remain passive for long in the face of the high tariffs imposed on farm equipment. Without a state apparatus the merchants and industrialists in eastern Canada could never have put together the necessary military force for the conquest of the Indians and Métis of the West; nor could the legislation have been provided for the economic exploitation of the immigrant farmers.[9] Since the federal government was so clearly working in the interest of the eastern capitalists, the people of the West were soon engaged in efforts to set up a form of local responsible government, culminating in the demand for the establishment of a provincial government in Saskatchewan.

The Struggle for Responsible Government in the West

The federal government must have anticipated from the very beginning that its policies for the exploitation of the West were bound to create dissatisfaction and eventual organized resistance. From the very beginning the federal government set about controlling and manipulating this expected resistance so that it would remain fractured and, consequently, manageable. Since the Canadian Policy was designed as a systematic method of exploitation for a particular region, the government apparatus in the West was structured to control the expected regional political resistance to such exploitation. As was originally the case in Canada, the resistance of the small farmers and craftsmen was expected to take the form of a struggle for responsible government through existing political institutions. If western resistance was to follow the usual pattern, it would be only after peaceful parliamentary efforts to achieve responsible government had failed completely that the government would have to prepare for armed resistance.

Within this context then, the federal government set up the Department of the Interior with a specific purpose in mind, the implementation of the Canadian Policy in the West.[10] The North-West Council was set up as an appointed governing body for the North-West Territories.[11] From the beginning the Council was quite clearly designed to function as a colonial administration. In fact, it never attempted to pass itself off as a democratic parliamentary institution. Although some elected representatives were eventually integrated into the North-West Council, the process was never anything more than tokenism, so that legislation aimed at the needs of the local people was never seriously attempted. Throughout the Council's history, the appointees' power greatly outweighed that of the elected representatives who were, in any event, loyal local Conservatives.

Within the political context of the time, however, the North-West Council did function successfully to co-opt and neutralize the protest movements that were springing up against the policies of the central government. At times the North-West Council members themselves began to lose patience with the federal government which, taking no chances, retained the power to approve or reject all legislation passed by the North-West Council. The following motion, passed at a North-West Council meeting, indicates just how tight federal control was:

> This council deeply regrets that the Privy Council has not been pleased to communicate their approval or disapproval of the legislation and many resolutions adopted by Council at their meetings held on the 4th, 8th, 11th and 13th September, 1873, March 11th, 12th, 14th, 16th, 1874, and June 1st and 2nd, 1874, and they respectfully represent that such long delay has paralyzed the action of the Council.[12]

The Canadian historian, G.F.G. Stanley, commented on the division of power that existed between the North-West Council and the federal government in Ottawa:

> It is important to note that the administration of Indian Affairs and the control of the Mounted Police remained with the federal authorities. The Dominion Government also reserved the right to disallow ordinances of the North-West Council.[13]

Clearly, the federal government had created a governing body and an overall administrative structure that reflected the fact that the West was merely a colony of the eastern merchants and industrialists. With direct control of the police, and with tight control over all local legislation, the federal government had ensured that the West could not politically resist the structured exploitation by the eastern merchants and manufacturers. There was, then, no effective parliamentary process to deal with local grievances. The North-West Council was used by the federal authorities to channel the various western protest movements into a harmless and futile process.

The North West Mounted Police Force was also used politically to manipulate and control the various ethnic groups in the North-West. Commissioner Macleod of the North West Mounted Police was specific about his intention to co-opt the expected Métis resistance when, in May 1878, he informed Fred White, Secretary of State, that it would be wise to have a token Métis representative sit on the North-West Council.[14] He also advised the Secretary of State that the Métis should be encouraged to write petitions to the government, outlining their problems and concerns.[15] Macleod's advice was taken seriously by the federal government. Pascal Breland, the notorious Métis opportunist of the 1869-70 Resistance, was appointed to the North-West Council, and the Métis, between 1878 (the year of Macleod's communication with the Secretary of State) and 1885 (the year of the armed resistance) concentrated most of their political efforts on the writing of petitions to the federal government.[16] As a result, the police and other federal authorities were able to pinpoint the leaders of the various resistance movements.

Although the North-West Council was ineffective as a means of redressing western grievances, it was remarkably successful in its endeavours to open up land in the West for speculation by negotiating treaties with the western Indian tribes.[17] The federal government, particularly the Conservative government under Sir John A. Macdonald, provided the necessary police force to ensure that favourable treaties would be made with the Indians.

The land claims of the Métis population in Manitoba had been extinguished under the terms of the Manitoba Act of 1870 through the use of land or money scrip.[18] This scrip, issued by the federal government, entitled the Métis bearer to 160 acres of open crown land, or $160. In Manitoba, 1.4 million acres had been set aside for the purpose of extinguishing Métis land claims. This outlay was described by a government spokesman as a paltry amount to pay for access to the millions of fertile acres across the West.[19] As well, the issuing of scrip was recognized, on the basis of the American experience, as the cheapest and most efficient way to quickly place vast amounts of land into the hands of banks and land speculators,[20] who were charged with the task of settling the West with a European population already imbued with a work ethic. Europeans, unlike the Métis, were accustomed to being exploited through institutional systems based upon the ownership of private property.

The treaties made between the government and the Indians presumed to extinguish Indian land claims. The scrip issued to the Métis of Manitoba presumed to extinguish Métis land claims. However, no serious attempts were made prior to 1885 to extinguish the land claims of the French-speaking Métis living in the North-West Territories.[21] This grievance was the source of Métis discontent and continued militancy from 1870 through to the armed Resistance of 1885.

Although the federal government's refusal to settle Métis land claims in the North-West has never been satisfactorily explained by Canadian historians, one thing is clear: the North-West Council was not empowered to deal on its own with such important issues.

By the late 1870s it had become apparent to the people of the Territories that the North-West Council was, at best, an impotent political institution that *could not* redress western grievances. Deep frustration was felt by the residents of the North-West over the Council's failure to procure land surveys and land title for the people who were permanently settled in the territories west of Manitoba.[22] As well, the Council had failed to supply sufficient schools and other basic and necessary services. By the early 1880s, direct action began to supersede Parliamentary debate through the North-West Council as a means of solving political problems in the West. Even this direct action seems to have been manipulated in many respects by the federal government. As Commissioner Macleod had hoped, these actions took the form of petitions to the federal government.

The Indians were perhaps the only group in the North-West that did not engage in a programme of petitioning the federal government. The white farmers, and the English-speaking half-breed population (who were also heavily engaged in farming) complained through petitions about the high tariffs on farm machinery, the restrictive regulations on lumber and firewood, and the lack of markets for their produce. The Métis, dependent for the most part on the Catholic clergy as their intermediaries, petitioned the federal government for title to the lands they occupied, for farm equipment loans, and surveys that recognized their subsistence-level farms along the North Saskatchewan. While the white and half-breed populations intended to farm on a commercial basis, the Métis continued to operate subsistence-level farms that stretched back from the river front as had been their custom in Red River. The Métis, living as subsistence farmers and buffalo hunters, had petitioned the federal government for many years for the right to fish and hunt without restrictions and for certain laws to protect the buffalo from wanton slaughter.[23]

In 1881 the Métis campaign of petitioning, already controlled by the Catholic clergy, was further co-opted by Lawrence Clarke, the first elected representative from the North-West Territories to the North-West Council. Clarke was the representative for the District of Lorne which consisted of the regions in and near the present city of Prince Albert. It included all of the major Métis settlements as well. In 1881 Lawrence Clarke, in his official capacity as the elected representative for the District of Lorne, took charge of the important petition or "memorial" that was sent to the federal government from the North-West Territories.[24] This petition described the West's ability to grow wheat, and asked for immediate surveys to end the often dangerous disputes that were arising between settlers over property boundaries. Although it avoided the issue of responsible government, the petition asked for early government action to ensure that land title would be given to the people who occupied the farms in the region. In this same petition Father André, spokesman for the Métis, beseeched the federal government to grant land title to the Métis who were living on their long, narrow, subsistence-level farms. André cited instances where new settlers were claiming existing Métis farms.[25] This petition was passed on by Lawrence Clarke to the lieutenant governor in council, who forwarded the petition to the Minister of the Department of the Interior, Sir John A. Macdonald, who had taken personal charge of the department.[26]

As a result of this and other petitions, some limited gains were made by the white and English-speaking half-breed settlers between 1881 and 1885. These groups did have their lands surveyed and many of them received formal title to the lands they occupied prior to 1885. However, the French-speaking Métis who lived within the tract of land owned by the Prince Albert Colonization Company did not receive either the survey or title to the lands they occupied.[27] Despite the dozens of petitions sent to Ottawa by the Métis, and despite the often repeated advice of the local police force and government land agents, the government refused to grant title to the Métis. Since the Métis, like their neighbours, had actively engaged in the process of petitioning, and since they had consistently voted Conservative in all the local elections, the federal government's failure to grant land title to them was seen as a clear case of racial and religious discrimination.

For its part, the federal government was shrewd enough to use the ethnic and religious differences that existed among the mixed blood population of the North-West to its own advantage. As the Métis became more and more militant in response to the government's discriminatory treatment, and as the spectre of civil war loomed over the North-West in late 1884, most of the English-speaking half-breeds received title to the lands they occupied. In fact, the final settlement for these people came practically on the eve of the "Rebellion."

The claims of the white settlers and the half-breeds were settled in 1884 when the federal government sent Mr. W. Pearce to Prince Albert, Battleford, and other districts to settle the long-standing claims. Norman Black, a Saskatchewan historian at the turn of the century, wrote of Mr. Pearce's failure to deal with Métis land claims:

> A considerable number of claims were satisfactorily disposed of, but Mr. Pearce could not speak French and as the employment of an interpreter would have entailed expense, no enquiry was made into the special grievances of the French [Métis]. Comment is unnecessary.[28]

The government's settlement of half-breed and white claims, just prior to the outbreak of armed conflict removed the expected additional support for the Métis-led resistance. Although the majority of the white and half-breed neighbours of the Métis were strongly sympathetic,[29] they did not take the final step of entering into the armed struggle on their behalf. It is quite likely that many of them would have joined the Métis, had their own claims not been settled just prior to the outbreak of armed conflict. In retrospect, this seems to have been a classic case of the "divide-and-conquer" tactics so often used by England in its path to world conquest.

By 1885 the Métis of the North-West Territories had failed altogether in their efforts to obtain either responsible government, or their basic rights as landowning citizens. Until 1885, the federal government had maintained control of the region without the use of armed force. Political discontent had been channelled and controlled within manageable limits. Indeed, the so-called "Rebellion" of the Métis in 1885 may have been simply a further extension of government manipulation. In fact, it is likely that the Rebellion, too, was part of the federal government's own plans. Despite what may well turn out to be a "cover up" by Canadian historians, there is really little mystery about the whole question of the Canadian government's denial of Métis land claims in the North-West, a denial that literally drove the Métis into a state of armed rebellion.

It is possible that the Canadian government went further than simply denying Métis land claims in order to goad them into armed rebellion. The federal government may well have been involved in a plot that was designed to force the Métis into a state of open rebellion. Available evidence indicates that this plot was complicated, and involved local speculators, who, in all probability, worked with the approval or complicity of some elements within the federal government. Indeed, the plot potentially involved top ranking officials of the Canadian government working on behalf of the executive of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). Substantial evidence has been compiled for this paper to suggest that a government conspiracy did in fact take place. This conspiracy, it is argued, was designed to force the Métis into armed rebellion in the West, ultimately making further funding for the bankrupt CPR politically possible. Let us now examine the circumstances that motivated the Canadian government to force a fight with the Métis in March of 1885.

The Trans-Continental Railway: Vital First Step in the Canadian Policy

When its two hundred year reign over Rupert's Land ended in 1870, the Hudson's Bay Company's mercantile regime gave way to settlement of the Canadian West. Detailed plans were made by the emerging Canadian industrialists to settle the West as an internal colony. This involved using the established Hudson's Bay Company model of systematic underdevelopment to prevent the growth of local industry, save for the staple commodity controlled by the Company. However, the new staple was to be wheat, not fur, and eastern Canada was to become the new industrial metropolis instead of England.

An expedition had been sent west by the British and Canadian governments in 1857 to determine the suitability of the various regions of the West for agricultural development.[30] This expedition, headed by Captain Dawson and the Canadian naturalist, Henry Youle Hind, determined that the northern belt of the prairies was the region best suited for wheat growing and for the establishment of a viable agricultural colony.[31] Specifically, they recommended that the lands running in a northwesterly direction from the Red River to the region around the forks of the Saskatchewan River, then westward to Fort Edmonton, and west again to the foothills, were best suited for the creation of an agricultural colony.[32] They felt that the southern prairies were too arid, with a climate too harsh for agricultural settlement. Consequent to this study, long-range plans were made by the government and CPR syndicate to run the trans-continental railway through this northern "fertile belt," as it became known. The northern route for the CPR was surveyed at government expense and a path through the mountains, the "Pine River Pass," was explored, also at government expense. The settlement of Prince Albert, and the Métis settlements along the Saskatchewan River in the Prince Albert region, stood at the very centre of the fertile belt, at the most likely location for the future capital city of the North-West Territories. As well, this was a location that would contain a major rail centre, if the CPR was to fulfill its task of efficiently moving wheat to the international marketplace.

The Prince Albert Colonization Company included among its board of directors many of the top ranking Tory cabinet ministers, members of parliament and civil servants. The company located its property at this most likely place for an important rail centre, just south of Prince Albert.[33] The townships obtained by the Prince Albert Colonization Company were ones occupied for decades by the French-speaking Métis.[34] Instead of bringing in settlers, however, as colonization companies were supposed to do in order to earn their profits, the Prince Albert

Colonization Company began a programme of harassment designed to drive off the existing settlers on their property.[35] This action seemed all the more irrational at the time, since the Company could have enumerated the Métis population and received the standard government pay-out given the colonization companies for establishing settlers on their property.[36]

The Prince Albert Colonization Company, however, was not interested in establishing settlers. Instead, Company owners bought up property that could be used for urban development in, or near, what was expected to be the major rail centre and capital city of the North-West Territories. Indeed, the Prince Albert Colonization Company failed to locate a single settler on its valuable tracts of land, considered to be among the most fertile parcels of land in the North-West.[37]

The following is a list of the board of directors of the Prince Albert Colonization Company with their various connections to the Conservative government noted:

Member of Parliament or Senator	
Colonel A.T.H. Williams	Conservative (East Durham)
George Guillet	Conservative (West Northumberland)
James Beatty	Conservative (Toronto West)
Robert Hay	Liberal (Toronto Centre)
G.A. Drew	Conservative (North Wellington)
S. Macdonald	Conservative (Cape Breton)
Senator W. Miller	Conservative (Richmond)
A. Shaw	Conservative (South Bruce)
Hugo Kranz	Conservative (North Waterloo)
M.H. Gault	Conservative (Montréal West)
P.V. Valin	Conservative (Mont Morence)
J.C. Patterson	Conservative (Essex)
J.S. McCuaig	Conservative (Prince Edward)
Russell Stephenson	Conservative (Kent)
J.B. Daost	Conservative (Two Mountains)
Senator W.J. Almon	Conservative (Halifax)
Senator T.M. Gibbs	Conservative (New Market)

Senator A.N. Kaulback	Conservative (Lunenberg)
N.C. Wallace	Conservative (West York)
John White	Conservative (East Hastings)
C.C. Colby	Conservative (Stan Stand)
C.F. Ferguson	Conservative (North Leeds)
W. Elliott	Conservative (North Huron)
Senator W. Northwood	Conservative (Richmond)[38]

Small wonder that the Métis were the only group of people that did not receive title to the land they occupied; the high-ranking Conservatives, who owned the land through the Colonization Company scheme, were planning to become rich using information they were privy to by virtue of their positions as functionaries and elected representatives.

In fact the whole Colonization Company scheme had been designed by the federal government to create monopoly control over western land. This system was designed to function in much the same way the land tenure system of Great Britain had done. It was intended that the Colonization Companies would be owned and controlled by Conservative incumbents, senators, party hacks and other government supporters. In short, the colonization scheme was designed to create wealth for an emerging Canadian *petite bourgeoisie*. On the basis of information obtained either as government bureaucrats and elected representatives, or on the basis of political patronage, the Colonization Companies obtained huge tracts of land that straddled the proposed CPR route across the fertile northern belt of the prairies.[39] The Prince Albert Colonization Company, having the most direct links with the incumbent government, had located its property at the heart of the fertile belt, in what appeared to be the most opportune location possible, based on knowledge of the plan for the CPR route through the North.

Of course the Prince Albert Colonization Company was not the only company that obtained large tracts of land along the proposed CPR route. In fact, a dozen companies were involved. As a result, most of the land along the proposed northern route was obtained not by the CPR executive, but by a political, speculative clique, consisting in the main of loyal Conservative party supporters and politicians. This was an intolerable situation for the members of the CPR syndicate.

The CPR syndicate was the embodiment of the real economic power in Canada during the early 1880s.[40] While it is true that politicians and land speculators were reaping benefits on the basis of "inside" government information regarding western development, the real controllers of this development and the recipients of government largess were the bankers, wealthy speculators and railroad tycoons who controlled the CPR. This group received millions of dollars worth of existing track, millions of dollars in cash, and 25 million acres of choice land as an outright gift of the federal government.[41] As well, the CPR syndicate was guaranteed a twenty-year monopoly over transportation in the West. The syndicate had the power to override any government decision concerning the location of the rail line across Canada. Consequently, despite the years of work that had gone into surveying the northern pass through the mountains, the CPR executive abandoned the northern route when they found that too much of the land had been taken up by speculators involved in the colonization company scheme. Thus, the CPR executive arbitrarily and unilaterally decided that the line was to run across the barren lands of the south, lands deemed unsuitable for farming, instead of through the northern fertile belt, where a substantial agricultural settlement already existed near Prince Albert.[42]

The plans to run the CPR across the southern prairies in 1882 did not make sense in terms of the rational development of western resources, but they did put the CPR syndicate back in control of future urban and rural development across the West. The change in plan necessitated new surveys and new exploration expeditions for suitable mountain passes. Further, it meant that many branch lines would have to be built to connect the fertile belt (where nearly all existing settlers were located) to the main line, two hundred miles to the south. This meant that expenditures of additional millions of dollars would be necessary before the grain from farms established in the fertile belt could be moved to the marketplace.

Nevertheless, the move to the south was made; Regina became the capital city instead of Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw became the major rail centre. Thus, the Colonization Companies, located far to the north of the only rail line, could not survive. They went bankrupt; however, the investors were generously assisted by the federal government.[43] One of the few companies that remained solvent was the Prince Albert Colonization Company. The Conservative senators, politicians, and party supporters who controlled it felt confident that they could influence policy for the construction of future branch lines to the North.[44] As a result of inside information obtained by the Directors of the Prince Albert Colonization Company, parcels of land were juggled and traded off as government plans for northern branch lines shifted and changed.[45] These were the very lands occupied by the French-speaking Métis. Indeed, this land trading just prior to the "Rebellion" of 1885, along with the Prince Albert Colonization Company's continual harassment of Métis "squatters," played a large part in causing the Métis uprising of 1885.[46]

The Local Power Structure: A Model of Political Patronage

Despite the fact that the North-West was governed by the largely appointed membership of the North-West Council, there was a powerful Conservative political machine in place in the District of Lorne that allowed no effective opposition to emerge. For years prior to, during, and after the "Rebellion" local speculators, growing fat on government patronage, controlled the local political scene. The Conservative machine consistently defeated the radical and reform opposition candidates in the Prince Albert area. As well, the Conservatives seized control of the "non-political" grass roots organizations that were beginning to spring up as a result of the economic depression that followed the railway's shift from the northern to the southern route in 1882.

This economic depression, coupled with the growing resentment felt by the farmers of the region over the high tariffs on farm machinery and the lack of markets for their produce, led to economic chaos and general political instability in the region. Control of these local protest movements was necessary if the government was to ensure social stability for investment capital. Thus, just as the North–West Council prevented the growth of responsible government through the electoral process, so too did the local Conservative political machine prevent a union of disparate elements and ethnic groups that might lead to a coordinated, organized, extra-parliamentary resistance to federal government policies.

Most prominent in this process of maintaining control over protest groups through both direct and parliamentary means was Lawrence Clarke. Clarke was the chief factor for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Carlton. He had served as the first elected member to the North–West Council, being elected in 1881. As a speculator and entrepreneur, he was at the centre of the emerging business community in the Prince Albert district by 1883.[47] As the chief factor, Clarke had long been a major employer, particularly of Métis labour.[48] As the "king-pin" of the local Conservative political machine, Clarke had proven to be a powerful, indeed an invaluable ally of the federal government.

Lawrence Clarke was a wealthy and well-educated man who had originally emigrated from Northern Ireland. Clarke's intellectual ability and charismatic presence as a public speaker combined with his prestige as a major employer and speculator to make him a successful leader.[49] Indeed, Lawrence Clarke was the man most responsible for the destruction of the reform party's electoral campaigns. As well, Clarke was personally responsible for the co-option and neutralization of the nascent Farmer's Union in the District of Lorne. With a gift of one hundred dollars, and complimentary remarks for many of the uneducated and naive Farmer's Union executives, Lawrence Clarke won the favour of the majority at a founding meeting and became a *life member* of the Union.[50] Doctor Porter, leader of the reform movement, who was in attendance, was unable to prevent the takeover. William Henry Jackson, a prominent member of the Liberal reform opposition, and an activist in the Union, summed up the whole affair:

> To sum up the salient points of this instructive transaction, we see a number of men who have no logical right to become members of an agricultural society obtain entrance to it by force of their numbers and the scant attendance of farmers, combined with the ignorance and servility of the secretary and president, proceed to make other members responsible for principles they abhor and pretensions they despise, profer a life membership to a man whose interests are incompatible with the highest interests of the society, investing him at the same time with a spurious title, thereby stultifying both themselves and those upon whom they seek to force their views, and finally when an actual farmer opposed their attack upon the dignity of the society by adopting their own principles of bestowing spurious titles and showing illogical results, they then put the cap sheaf on their folly and arrogance by moving

> his expulsion without by-laws and without calling him to order or proving that he was out of order.[51]

The uneducated rank-and-file members of the Farmer's Union were simply no match for the shrewd tactics of the Clarke clique. Young William Henry Jackson must have been seen as something of an eccentric, or a "radical" by the simple folk of the district. The power and prestige of the Conservative Party speculators together with Clarke's smooth tongue and his generous gifts of cash, proved to be a winning combination against the abstract idealism of the popular movement.

Clarke's takeover of the Farmer's Union was no isolated incident. Lawrence Clarke played an important part in all local politics, time and again nipping radical organizations in the bud. And Clarke was no stranger to Ottawa. As a result of his national and local connections, the Conservative network touched base with every ethnic group in the region. However, it owed its electoral success to Lawrence Clarke's relationship with Father André, the Breton-French priest who controlled the Métis world-view to a remarkable extent. André, a proponent of the arch-Conservative ultramontane order that feared free thought and abhorred secular politics, was the local political king-maker.[52] Since André controlled the entire block of Métis votes, he embodied the balance of political power for the entire District of Lorne.

Candidates of both the Conservative and Reform parties came hat-in-hand to André for Métis support. André inevitably threw his support, and consequently the support of all the French-speaking Métis, behind the Conservative candidate. The following, in Father André's own words, explains his priorities:

> The elections this year [1883] took place in March. Two candidates stood, Mr. MacDowall, representing the bourgeoisie and Dr. Porter for the lower classes and the Free Masons . . . . But thanks to Catholic support, the candidate of the bourgeoisie has been elected and to recompense his Metis voters he gave $100.00 for the erection of the Church of St. Antoine.[53]

Thus, Father André led the Métis into the camp of their enemies, to be supporters of the policies that were a disaster for them. Their natural political allies, Dr. Porter and William Henry Jackson of the Reform party, were rejected by the Métis at the polls. Dr. Porter and William Henry Jackson supported the demands of both the Indians and Métis as well as those of the white settlers in the region.[54] Among the resolutions passed by the reform group during the election of 1883 were the following, describing their complaints with the National Policy, and calling for provincial status and local control over resources:

> Resolved that these causes for the present and future scarcity of cash are brought about by the legislation of the Dominion Government;
>
> Resolved that the reason for the Dominion Government legislating in such a manner as to bring about these causes is the fact that they based their judgement on the interests of the Eastern

> provinces or of their friends and not on the interests of the Northwest Territories;
>
> Resolved that it is essential to the prosperity of the Northwest Territories that they be forthwith formed into provinces, each province having the power to appoint its Provincial Legislature and a just number of representatives to the Federal Legislation, the Provincial Legislature having full control over the resources and internal administration of its province.[55]

Clearly the Reform Party was striving for the attainment of local responsible government through provincial status within the Canadian federation. The above minutes outlined the settler's grievances with the Canadian Policy. It revealed that its authors had an understanding of the role of the Canadian state in setting the West up as a colony of the eastern merchants and industrialists. Yet, despite the accuracy of their analysis, they were never able to win over the electorate or create a winning parliamentary party. The local Conservative political machine was successful in all cases in preventing the local Liberals from achieving either end. This was all the more incredible in view of the scandals that emerged from time to time because of the blatant patronage shown the Clarke clique of politician-speculators by the federal government.

One such scandal nearly resulted in an armed insurrection in 1883, when the telegraph line was extended to Prince Albert.[56] The location of the telegraph terminal was important because this terminal would mark the future centre of the commercial portion of the city.[57] As a result, businessmen and speculators vied with each other, and the government authorities, to have the terminal located on their property. When it was found that the government authorities planned to have the terminal located on the property of members of Clarke's clique, the citizens of Prince Albert took to the streets.[58]

The resulting riot was taken seriously by the federal authorities. Troops were rushed to Prince Albert to quell the disturbance.[59] In fact, the government surveyor, Mr. Gisbourne, who had been responsible for picking the location of the terminal, had to be saved from the wrath of the crowd by Lawrence Clarke. Wielding a loaded shotgun, Clarke drove the crowd back before they were able to carry out their avowed intention of riding Gisbourne out of town on a rail.[60] Although Lawrence Clarke was not re-elected to the North-West Council after the telegraph scandal, delegates from his clique continued to be elected, thanks to Father André's continued support.

The corruption of the local Conservative party may have gone beyond simple patronage scandals such as the telegraph affair. The Clarke clique may have conspired to create a war between the French-speaking Métis of the region and the federal government. When the economic depression hit the region in 1882, following the shift of the Trans-Continental Rail Line to the South, the clique began to discuss the economic benefits that might accrue should a war break out between the federal government and the local Métis. Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney informed Prime Minister Macdonald he was aware that the Clarke clique of speculators would be happy should war break out. Dewdney wrote to Macdonald:

> The fact is the Hudson's Bay Company required some freighting to be done and he, [Lawrence Clarke] cut down the rates below the recognized prices and the Metis became hostile towards him. At Prince Albert there is a certain clique which would like nothing better than to see a row so that money might be brought among them.[61]

Indeed, the Clarke clique may have been instrumental in bringing Louis Riel back to the North-West from Montana for the purpose of bringing on an armed conflict. The folk wisdom of the region has it that Lawrence Clarke and other members of the Conservative clique were initially involved in surreptitiously supporting the popular movement, and in funding the return of Louis Riel to the North-West.[62] It is unclear whether or not the federal government was aware of Clarke's role as a "low profile" supporter of the movement to bring Riel back from Montana in 1884. But, if the "small-time" speculators of Prince Albert had something to gain from a Métis rebellion, the British military and the Canadian state authorities had much more at stake.

The CPR: Critical Global Link for Imperial Great Britain

For Britain the construction of the CPR was a vital step that was required for the transportation of British troops to the various theatres of war developing around the world. The CPR was needed as an alternate route for British troops to the Suez Canal. By the summer of 1884, Great Britain was in danger of losing the Suez Canal to the Egyptians, who were temporarily enjoying military victories over Great Britain's armies in their homeland. The following newspaper article of March 1885, explains:

> THE NEW ROUTE TO INDIA
>
> TRANSPORTATION OF BRITISH TROOPS
> OVER THE CANADIAN PACIFIC
>
> Mr. R.B. Angus of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and in reference to the communication to be received by the Canadian Government from the British Government asking what is the earliest date at which communication with the Pacific can be had over the Canadian Pacific Railway, said that the Intelligence Department of the Imperial Government had the matter under consideration. In the event of the Suez Canal becoming closed, the shortest route to India would be over the Canadian Pacific. This route, in the event of a war with Russia will be the shortest route to both India and China. Great Britain must have an alternative route, as complications may arise in the Mediterranean which would make communications with Egypt difficult.[63]

Another newspaper article dated 5 March 1885, indicated:

> It is reported that the Government has received instructions to raise five regiments in Canada for the Imperial Service. It is also reported that the English Government has requested authentic information as to whether the Canadian Pacific Railway will be available for the transportation of troops this

> fall. War between England and Russia over the Afghan question is probable. The Times say [*sic*] England is ready and Russia has only to say the word. That England is on the eve of a foreign war of gigantic magnitude is day by day made more apparent by the telegrams received, and the country is in no mood to be trifled with.[64]

The proposed new route from Great Britain to the Far East, using the CPR and a fleet of ships stationed on the Canadian west coast, could actually reduce the travel time required using the old route via the Suez Canal. This had tremendously important military and commercial significance. The *Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review* reported in its edition of 20 February 1885:

> The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway will provide England with a new route to Hong Kong, occupying but a little over a month, or 16 days less than the Suez Canal route. This would enable England to land troops in China 2 days earlier than French troops starting at the same time, or the Russians from Odessa, in the event of the Suez Canal falling into hostile hands.[65]

Clearly, the construction of the CPR was a vital step in England's plans for continued world conquest. It provided the strategic transportation link to Britain's battlefields around the world. As well, it was a vital link in Great Britain's trading infrastructure with the Far East.

The Canadian merchants and industrial capitalists needed the CPR as badly as did the Imperial "Mother Country." Prosperity in the colony depended upon immigration and the creation of a prosperous agricultural economy in the West, which was to act as a captive market for the Canadian industrial goods that were being produced in the East. For both the British war machine, and the emerging Canadian industrialists, the successful completion of the CPR was the key. These groups did not, however, provide the majority of the capital for the CPR construction. Although the great railway was privately owned, it had been publicly financed.

Nevertheless, by the early spring of 1885, the CPR was, for all intents and purposes, bankrupt.[66] The move from the northern route to the southern had necessitated the outlay of additional millions of dollars.[67] Furthermore, there is evidence that some of the public funding had been used by the CPR syndicate for reasons other than railway construction.[68] Newspaper accounts claimed that the land and money grants to the railway were often much greater than the actual cost of railway construction.[69] Because of the recurring scandals over CPR "graft" and "corruption," it had become politically impossible, by the spring of 1885, for the Conservative government to continue to provide public funds for further CPR construction. The "Pacific Scandal" of 1872–73 was still on the minds of the voters of Upper and Lower Canada. The scandal had clearly revealed the extent to which the incumbent Conservative government was indebted to the CPR executive. The millions of dollars given the CPR syndicate were seen as the railway's payoff for the syndicate's blatant bribery of top ranking Conservatives. By 1885, the voters were fed up with the railway's feast at the public trough.[70] And Prime Minister Macdonald knew it.

Indeed, by early 1885, Macdonald's own cabinet was adamant in its decision that there would be no further funding for the CPR.[71] Prime Minister Macdonald found himself on the horns of an unresolvable political dilemma. Further financing of the CPR was politically impossible. Macdonald realized that the financial ruin of the railway was at hand. Without government aid, the CPR was finished; without the CPR, the government was finished. Yet, Macdonald could not risk further public funding. Donald Creighton, one of Canada's most prestigious historians wrote:

> It [CPR] could survive only with government aid. Yet its relief by government seemed a political impossibility.[72]

To add to the problems facing the CPR, workmen in the West were on strike because the pay car had not arrived. The general manager wrote to the company's president:

> Have no means of paying wages, pay car can't be sent out, and unless we get immediate relief we must stop. Please inform Premier and Finance Minister. Do not be surprised, or blame me if an immediate and most serious catastrophe happens.[73]

As of March 1885, one thing was certain. Unless some type of miracle occurred the CPR would be ruined, and along with its bankruptcy would go the failure of the Canadian Policy. Pressing British war needs rendered the completion of the railroad a crisis situation, affecting the well-being of world-wide British Imperialism. Neither of these groups would allow the CPR to go bankrupt. Its completion to the west coast was absolutely necessary both for the fulfillment of the plans of the emerging Canadian State and for the war needs of the British Imperial government. The Canadian government, however, was in a position to create its own "miracle." This was to come in the form of a Métis "Rebellion" in the West.

When Louis Riel returned from Montana to take up the Métis struggle for land claims in mid-1884, he must have disappointed the clique of speculators hoping for a war that would bring prosperity back to the North-West. Instead of advocating armed conflict, Riel espoused a moderate and peaceful position aimed at creating a coalition among the Métis, half-breeds, and white settlers of the region.[74] Riel restricted his activities to peaceful organization that revolved around the drive for responsible government, through a series of petitions to the federal government.[75]

In mid-1884 Riel was joined by elements of the Liberal Reform group who had failed to organize parliamentary or extra-parliamentary opposition to the ruling Conservatives of the region. Most notable among this latter group was young William Henry Jackson.[76] Jackson quickly became a close personal friend of Riel and it was Jackson who was largely responsible for drawing up the Bill of Rights that was to become the focal point of Métis political organization throughout the last half of 1884.[77]

Riel's moderate tone and approach to the problems of the North-West earned him some limited support from the news media of the day. However, the federal government provided bribe money as an incentive to the Prince Albert newspaper for a political about-face. It suddenly turned against Riel in the fall of 1884.[78]

By January 1885, it had become clear to Riel that the federal government was not going to respond peacefully to his political initiatives. Recognizing the possibility of a set-up, Riel considered taking a pay-off from the federal government.[79] Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney advised Prime Minister Macdonald that Riel would accept money in return for his voluntary departure. Strangely, Macdonald, who had not hesitated to bribe Riel for the same purpose in 1870, refused flatly to spend more money for this purpose in 1885. The Prime Minister informed Dewdney:

> We have no money to give Riel. How would it look to have to admit we could not govern the country and had to bribe a man to go away.[80]

By February 1885, it is likely that Sir John A. Macdonald had plans for Riel, plans that were designed to use him in a complicated plot to save the failing CPR.

Up until this time the Prime Minister's actions in Parliament appeared somewhat irrational to the public. He had not responded to the petitions of the Métis. Indeed, it seemed as though he was becoming senile and incapable of dealing justly with the people of the West. But the Prime Minister was not as irrational or as senile as his actions indicated. Sir John A. Macdonald had no intention whatsoever of entering into serious diplomatic discussions with any member of the popular movement in the North-West Territories, including Louis Riel. Instead, a government plot was conceived. There can be no doubt about the Prime Minister's intentions after he received the North-West Bill of Rights in December of 1884; armed conflict would replace diplomacy. The demands of the people of the North-West were not to be met. Although the Prime Minister received The Bill of Rights, and forwarded it to the British Colonial Office, he denied ever having received it. Sir John A. Macdonald stood up in Parliament and solemnly declared:

> The Bill of Rights has never been officially or indeed in any way promulgated so far as we know, and transmitted to the Government.[81]

The Bill of Rights had, of course, been received and acknowledged by the Secretary of State and forwarded to the British Colonial Office.[82]

Why did the Prime Minister wish to keep Riel in the country, and why did he deny receiving the eleventh hour communication from the desperate Métis of the North-West? Donald Creighton posed the Prime Minister's dilemma in this manner:

> The two disasters – the revolt on the prairies and the collapse of the railway – had come together in time. And together they might destroy Prime Minister Macdonald and his Canada. They were separate problems. They would have to be dealt with separately. They could even be played off against each other. And in that possibility did not there still lie a real hope.

> Macdonald could use the railway to defend the west. He could use the west to justify the railway.[83]

Scattered among archives across Canada are fragmented bits of evidence that, when placed together in an overall historical context, begin to indicate what may have really happened just prior to the "Rebellion" of 1885.

Following the resistance of 1885, Prime Minister Macdonald, an aged and ailing statesman, rose in Parliament to defend the actions his government had taken in the North-West prior to, and during, the Métis "Rebellion" that had lasted from March to May of 1885. The Prime Minister produced a document intended for use as evidence to justify his government's use of the military as a means of solving the problems in the North-West. This document was presented as an "unsigned letter" from a resident of the North-West Territories. This "unsigned letter" was, according to Sir John A. Macdonald, the basis for the military action that had been taken against the Métis.[84] This letter had contradicted all of the information that the Prime Minister had received from his own police in the North-West and from most of the civil servants dealing with the Indian and Métis people.[85]

As it later turned out, the letter *had* been signed, and its author was Lawrence Clarke.[86] Why did the Prime Minister not act upon the oft-repeated advice of his own police in the North-West? They had all given much the same advice over a period of years: settle with the Métis and there will be no trouble. Why had the government failed to settle Métis land claims prior to March 1885? The cost of putting down the "Rebellion" vastly exceeded that of settling all the claims of all the Métis in the North-West Territories at that time.[87] And why did the government act upon the advice of Lawrence Clarke — a man who wanted war in the North-West — when he was the only informant advocating an armed solution?

It now seems clear that the federal government utilized the local Conservative clique and some of its members in a conspiracy to force the Métis to rebel, so that further public funding could be justified to facilitate the completion of the CPR to the Pacific Coast. In February of 1885 Lawrence Clarke was chosen by the Métis to act as a courier and a diplomat who would travel to Ottawa to argue the merits of their Bill of Rights with the federal government.

Riel and Jackson had realized, prior to the outbreak of hostilities, that the federal government would not negotiate seriously with either of them. As a result, it was felt that someone belonging to the local Conservative party should be chosen to act as a representative for the Métis in Ottawa. Since the Métis had loyally voted for the Conservative members of the North-West Council over the years, they hoped that Ottawa might reciprocate by paying heed to such a courier. The *Prince Albert Daily Herald* carried an account of the selection of Clarke for this task:

> In the darkening clouds of Metis dissatisfaction, their leaders still showed considerable forebearance. They asked the Honorable Lawrence Clarke, a one-time member of the Northwest

> Territories Council, to proceed to Ottawa and make representations to the Government on their behalf.[88]

In February 1885, Clarke made the journey to Ottawa, carrying a petition containing hundreds of names that was to accompany the Bill of Rights, which had been previously sent to Ottawa. As the weeks passed and no news was received from Ottawa, uneasy feelings began to give way to fear and then anger among the Métis. During Clarke's absence the Métis set up a provisional government and made general plans for military organization. When Lawrence Clarke returned from Ottawa on 18 March 1885, he was carrying the government's official response to both the Métis petitions and the North-West Bill of Rights. Of the meeting between the Métis and Lawrence Clarke on that fateful day, the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* records the following:

> The Honorable Lawrence Clarke brought back from Ottawa a most disheartening message. As chief factor for the Hudson's Bay post at Fort Carlton, he had naturally the confidence of the natives and [Metis] who had traded for years with the great company. The message of the Honorable Lawrence Clarke was that the petition of the natives would be answered by bullets.[89]

Norman Black wrote this:

> Mr. Clarke's ill-judged practical joke had suddenly transformed a passing gust of excitement into an emeute, which further folly at Ft. Carlton was to turn into genuine Civil War.[90]

As a result of this meeting between the Métis and their official emissary from Ottawa, parties were organized to raid local stores, in a final attempt to find food and ammunition to carry them through the expected armed struggle with the police. These actions were, of course, interpreted by the police in the region as the beginning of an insurrection. However, the Métis did not go on the attack. Instead, they took up defensive positions at Batoche. Lawrence Clarke then proceeded to provoke the white community and the police in precisely the same manner as he had done to the Métis. In the end, it was Lawrence Clarke who provoked Major Crozier to initiate the fight at Duck Lake, and thus bring on the "Rebellion" in full force.[91]

Evidence has been unearthed indicating that Lawrence Clarke was in fact acting in the pay of the federal government as an *agent provocateur*.[92] Lawrence Clarke was familiar with the police codes of the time. Clarke had exchanged coded messages with Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney and others. In fact, there is evidence on file indicating that certain officials had suggested to someone in the Department of the Interior that Lawrence Clarke should be hired as a government spy in 1884, six months prior to his recorded activities as an *agent provocateur*.[93]

The so-called "Rebellion" of 1885 did in fact serve the purposes for which it had been designed. When the CPR responded by transporting troops from the East to the scene of the disturbances in the West, a grateful country provided the capital necessary to complete the railway to the west coast. Dr. John Archer, a Saskatchewan historian, wrote of this:

> The company had been nearly bankrupt by January, 1885, and Prime Minister Macdonald had been unwilling to approach Parliament again for financial backing. When armed rebellion broke out in the West, and when Van Horne performed miracles in moving troops from Toronto to Winnipeg in spite of uncompleted sections of the railway north of the Great Lakes, Macdonald gauged the public mind and pushed bills through Parliament guaranteeing company bonds. With the money found, Van Horne had the line completed by autumn of 1885.[94]

In all of this the Canadian government was not acting out of character with British governments of the day. Indeed, the divide-and-conquer tactics of the Canadian government had been borrowed from Great Britain's two hundred-year experience in the acquisition of colonies around the world.

Conclusion

The role of the state appears more complex today than was the case throughout the nineteenth century. It was (by today's standards) embarrassingly clear under the Tory government of Sir John A. Macdonald. The government's subservience to industrial capital in the East was perhaps best demonstrated by George S. Kealy in describing the manufacturers' meeting with the Prime Minister in 1878. Kealy wrote:

> Delegations made their wishes known to the new Tory Government, and a complicated process of trade-offs then commenced. Critics were certain that the famous "Red Parlor" meetings in Toronto's Queens Hotel between Macdonald and the industrialists revolved more around campaign funds for the Tories than the good of the country. Be that as it may, by 1879 Canadian industrial capitalists had come to dominate the state and were able to dictate their self-interested policies in the name of the common good. John A. Macdonald had pledged himself to this policy in a speech in 1878 when he announced, "I cannot tell what protection you require. But let each manufacturer tell us what he wants and we will try to give him what he needs."[95]

The myth of the government's role as a mediator of a plurality of conflicting interests in democratic society seems to be a contrivance by ideologues of the twentieth century. The purpose of the fledgling Canadian State under Sir John A. Macdonald was the solidification of British hegemony over the northern half of North America, and within this context the creation of a healthy national *bourgeoisie*. Capital was to be created for this purpose through (1) the oppression and marginalization of the Indian and Métis of the West, (2) the creation of an internal agricultural colony in the West, (3) the provision of privately owned, publicly financed, transportation and land development monopolies, (4) the imposition of trade restrictions and tariffs to ensure the efficient exploitation of the agrarian West by the eastern Canadian industrialists, and (5) the provision of police and a standing army to enforce the necessary oppression of the Natives and exploitation of the immigrants who were to be used as agrarian producers of surplus value.

Most of these objectives were obtained by the Canadian State within the legal framework of the day. However, the Canadian government appears to have been involved in conspiring to force the Métis into an armed insurrection to politically justify further public funding for the CPR. In this, it appears to have gone beyond the legal limits of state activity, even for that period. This paid off handsomely for the eastern industrialists, and for the CPR, now Canada's largest corporation.

The government's actions, necessary as they may have been for the preservation of Great Britain's class structure throughout the Canadian colony, have left a bitter legacy of racial hatred in the West. The Métis, economically marginalized and ideologically condemned as mindless sheep who were led astray by a madman, have been set upon by historians and educators alike who have maintained the myth of the "stupid savage" standing in the way of progress. Thus, the impoverished Métis and Indian populations in the West today sit sullenly apart from society. This legacy of racial hatred, exacerbated by the contrived War of 1885, has been institutionalized and passed on to upcoming generations. This racism and the resulting cruel ghettoization of the Métis is the natural result of the government's shadowy activities of one hundred years ago.

NOTES

1 This does not refer to some general, or abstract policy. It refers to specific government policy and actions that literally forced the Métis to take up arms against the Canadian State, so that the Macdonald government could politically justify further funding for the bankrupt CPR. Donald George McLean, *1885, Metis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1985).

2 Daniel Drache, "Rediscovering Canadian Political Economy," a transcription of a talk delivered to the Learned Society Meeting, Edmonton, May–June 1975. For a detailed account of the colonization of the prairie West and its relationship to the creation of Canadian merchant capital, read Vernon C. Fowke, *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957). For an understanding of the industrial capitalist's relationship to the state apparatus during the Sir John A. Macdonald regime, read, Gregory Kealey, "Toronto's Industrial Revolution, 1850–1892," in Michael Cross and Gregory Kealey, eds., *Canada's Age of Industry, 1849–1896* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982).

3 Kealey, "Toronto's Industrial Revolution."

4 Fowke, *National Policy*, 43. Fowke suggested that the United States of America would quickly annex the West unless Canada expanded trade to the west coast.

5 Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada With the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* (Toronto: Belford Clarke and Co., 1880), 187.

6 Ibid.

7 Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC) Macdonald Papers, MG 26A1(e) volume 526, LB 23, 1884. (Exact date not recorded.) Prime Minister Macdonald listed the potential troublemakers in the West as (1) the Farmer's Union agitators, (2) the French half-breeds advised by Riel, and (3) Indian Chiefs such as Pi-A-Pot and Big Bear.

8 As early as 1879, Department of Interior officials had been told by authorities in the West that trouble with the Indians could be averted by dealing justly with their leaders, the Métis. In particular, see Archdiocese of St. Boniface, Taché Papers, cahier N, TA 4117–4132, Archbishop of St. Boniface to J.S. Dennis, 3 February 1879.

9 Kealey, "Toronto's Industrial Revolution," 35.

10 Ken Hatt, "The Northwest Scrip Commissions As Federal Policy – Some Initial Findings," *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3, no. 1 (1983): 117–29.

11 George F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 174.

12 Norman Black, *History of Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories*, volume 1 (Regina: Saskatchewan Historical Publishers, 1913), 174.

13 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 174.

14 PAC, RG 18, volume 2230, p. 33. NWMP Commissioner Macleod to F. White, Secretary of State, 5 March 1878.

15 Ibid.

16 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 6 July 1885.

17 Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 187.

18 This scrip was issued under the terms of the Manitoba Act of 1870.

19 D.N. Sprague, "The Manitoba Land Question, 1870-1882," *The Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (Fall 1980): 74–84.

20 PAC, MG 26A, volume 103, pp. 41721-41728, Adams Archibald, Governor of Manitoba, to J. Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces, 22 December 1870.

21 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 6 July 1885.

22 PAC, M 626A, Macdonald Papers, volume 105, pp. 42104–42110, petition, Father André to the Lieutenant Governor, NWT, 7 June 1881.

23 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 48 Victoria (1885) vol. 13, no. 116, Petition of the Métis of Qu'Appelle to the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories, February 1878.

24 PAC, RG 15, Dominion Lands Branch, Department of the Interior,

file no. 36304 (238), memorial, Lawrence Clarke to the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories, 7 June 1881.

25 PAC, MG 26A, vol. 195, pp. 42104–42110, petition, André to Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories, 7 June 1881.

26 Prime Minister Macdonald took personal charge of the Department in 1878, upon his return to power.

27 André Lalonde, "Settlement In The Northwest Territories By Colonization Companies" (Ph.D. dissertation, Laval University, Québec, 1969), 175–76.

28 Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, 238.

29 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 306–7.

30 Henry Y. Hind, *Narratives of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expeditions of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Expeditions of 1858* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), 134.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 *The Globe* (Toronto), 15 September 1885. In an article, *The Globe* described how a land surveyor received shares in the Prince Albert Colonization Company in return for information; as well, John White, Conservative, East Hastings, received three hundred blind shares in return for "exerting influence."

34 Lalonde, "Colonization Companies," 175–76.

35 Ibid., 204.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 51–52.

39 Ibid., 172.

40 Pierre Berton, *The National Dream: The Great Railway* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), 232.

41 Fowke, *National Policy*, 48–49.

42 Berton, *The National Dream*, 232.

43 Lalonde, "Colonization Companies," 200–31.

44 Ibid., 173–99.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Garry Abrams, *Prince Albert: The First Century 1866–1966* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1966), 54–60.

48 Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Hardisty Papers, G-A1A vol.

1, file 31. Minutes of a meeting of the Métis winterers, 31 December 1871. Clarke was identified by the Métis as a major employer of Métis labour.

49 *McPhillips Saskatchewan Directory 1888*, Printed by Henry Thomas McPhillips, Qu'Appelle, NWT (available at the Regina Public Library, Regina). A personal profile of Lawrence Clarke is provided, 40–41.

50 University of Saskatchewan, Special Collections Library, Saskatoon, Jackson Papers, MSS C555/2/13.9m.

51 Ibid.

52 Public Archives of Alberta, Oblate Collection St. Laurent de Grondin Parish Records, D-IV-125. This document describes André's support for Clarke and other Conservative candidates.

53 Ibid., see St. Laurent chronicles for 1883.

54 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 306.

55 Jackson Papers, MSS C555/2/13.9, minutes of a meeting of the reform group (date unknown).

56 Abrams, *Prince Albert*, 56–60.

57 Ibid., 56.

58 Ibid., 50–54.

59 PAC, MG 26A, vol. 211, p. 89951, Lieutenant Governor Dewdney to Sir John A. Macdonald.

60 Abrams, *Prince Albert*, 56.

61 PAC, MG 26A, vol. 107, p. 42776, Lieutenant Governor Dewdney to Sir John A. Macdonald (date not recorded).

62 Robert Jefferson, "Chapters in the North West History Prior to 1890 - Related by Old Timers" in *Fifty Years on the Saskatchewan* (Battleford: Canadian North West Historical Society's Publication, 1929), 122.

63 *Regina Leader*, 5 March 1885.

64 *Saskatchewan Herald*, 5 March 1885.

65 *Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review*, 20 February 1885.

66 *Saskatchewan Herald*, 9 March 1885.

67 *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, 29 July 1884.

68 PAC, MG 27IC-2, microfilm reel no. M-24, C.S. Campbell to Sir Alex Campbell, Minister of Justice, 3 March 1885.

69 PAC, MG 26A, volume 127(1), p. 52374, newspaper clipping claimed the rail line cost $10,000 per mile, and land grants to the CPR totalled $50,000 per mile.

70 *Saskatchewan Herald*, 18 March 1885.

71 Sir Joseph Pope, *The Day of Sir John A. Macdonald* (Toronto, Glasgow: Brooks and Company, 1921), 124-25.

72 Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain* (Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1955), 405.

73 Ibid., 415.

74 Original Document, PAC, Macdonald Papers, obtained from the Saskatchewan Archives Board, volume 4, "North West Rebellion" p. 154, report from Mr. Forget, Clerk of the North West Council, to Lieutenant Governor Dewdney, September 1884. After Riel's return, Dumont informed Forget, "We want our Indians fed, our rights recognized and Mr. Riel as our leader; but we don't desire to create any disturbances."

75 Ibid. Dumont made it clear in this message that the Métis wanted both Indian, half-breed and Métis rights restored.

76 "Jackson Papers," Special Collections Library, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.

77 Ibid. This fact is also recognized by George F. G. Stanley and all other historians who recorded the events leading up to the conflict of 1885.

78 PAC, MG 26A, volume 212, pp. 90109-90110, Lieutenant Governor Dewdney to Prime Minister Macdonald, 23 July 1884.

79 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 311.

80 Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Dewdney Papers, box 2, file 38, Macdonald to Dewdney, 20 February 1885.

81 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 48 Victoria, 23 March 1885.

82 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 307.

83 Creighton, *The Old Chieftain*, 417.

84 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 48 Victoria, 29 March 1885.

85 Ibid.

86 Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, Vol. 1, 284.

87 Auguste Trémaudan, a Métis historian, estimated the overall cost of crushing the rebellion at twenty million dollars. Government sources estimate five million. The cost of Métis land claims would have been several hundred thousand dollars. (See *Sessional Papers*, 1886).

88 *Prince Albert Daily Herald* (reprint series, 15, 16, 17 April 1935), from *Reminiscences of the Riel Rebellion of 1885* (Prince Albert: The Herald Printing Company, 1935), 43.

89 Ibid.

90 Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, 268.

91 Ibid., 282.

92 Jackson Papers, MSS C555/2/13.5, A.S. Morton, interview with Mrs. Plaxton (William Henry Jackson's sister), 1932.

93 Saskatchewan Archives Board, "North West Rebellion" vol. 4. J.A. Macrae, Chief Indian Agent to Sir John A. Macdonald, 5 August 1884.

94 John Archer, *Saskatchewan: A History* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980), 99.

95 Kealey, "Toronto's Industrial Revolution," 35.

Louis Riel: Was He Really Crazy? *

Thomas Flanagan

I must have given dozens of lectures on Louis Riel. After almost every one, a questioner has asked, in words that vary only slightly, "Was he really crazy?" The question is always posed with a certain air of finality, as if it were the most basic question that could be asked and the answer would determine one's view of Riel and his career.

On the contrary, little or nothing of importance about Riel rides on the answer to this pseudo-question, although it can help us understand the way others have reacted to the Métis leader. But apart from one early and obscure article,[1] I have never made a clear statement in writing on the issue.

Several parts of *Louis "David" Riel: Prophet of the New World,*[2] published as separate articles, adopted what certain medieval scholars, trying to reconcile philosophy and revelation, called the "two truths" approach. They argued that while God had revealed certain truths to the world, human reason could also reach conclusions which might conflict with revealed truth. Each truth could be accepted within its own frame of reference. My version of the two truths was to argue that, while Riel might be insane from a psychiatric point of view, a social scientist could see him as a millenarian prophet, the leader of a nativistic movement of resistance against colonial domination.[3] Each view was true within its own perspective. I claimed to emphasize the millenarian interpretation because it had previously been ignored, but I did not challenge the psychiatric view. The closest to an outright attack was a paper in the *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal*, which showed how Riel's confinement in two lunatic asylums in Québec had been characterized by gross violations of the law, without proof that he was dangerous to himself or others. "We may thus wish to revise our interpretation of Riel's certification," I wrote. "It was not an act of benevolence but an illegal and unjustifiable deprivation of liberty."[4] This was moderately unorthodox, but it did not confront the model of two truths as such, only its application to this case.

None of these articles represented my real opinion. I did not really think there were two truths about Riel; I believed rather that the psychiatric view was demonstrably false. But since the demolition of such a well-established doctrine was difficult, I did not think I could do it in an article and therefore saved the attempt for my book. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately in retrospect), I did not do a very good job of it. The two reviewers used by the University of Toronto Press agreed that my efforts in this direction were a failure. One wrote that my "frequently exasperating" manuscript was "mildly obsessive in its repetitive assault on conventional psychiatry"; the other wrote that "the important defect of the book is the almost fanatical adherence on Flanagan's part to a view of madness or insanity which is virtually impossible to sustain."

This resistance suggested that the book was unpublishable as originally conceived. The revisions consequently performed radical surgery, removing almost all the material dealing with the psychiatric interpretation of Riel. The published version of *Prophet of the New World* resorted once again to the two truths doctrine, to the perplexity of a few perceptive reviewers, who wondered what the book really meant to say about the insanity question.[5]

This episode illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of the academic reviewing system. The book that emerged was much better focussed, argued, and written than the original manuscript; yet it now lacked one of its most important ideas. The reviewing system is an excellent means of upholding standards, but it is also a powerful means of enforcing conservatism and conformity of opinion upon researchers.

Somewhat shaken by this encounter with the institutional authority of organized scholarship, I decided to leave the insanity question alone for a while and to turn my attention to unrelated matters such as aboriginal rights and land claims. A subsequent book, *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered*, touched on the insanity question only with respect to Riel's treason trial.[6] The book tried to show that Riel was responsible for his actions under the then prevailing doctrine of the McNaghten Rules. This was not very adventurous. Others had made the same point before; and in any case all students of the subject know that psychiatric insanity and legal insanity as a defence to criminal charges are two different things. Riel might well have been legally sane but "really" insane.

What better year than 1985 to try to clarify the insanity question, since public interest is turned to all aspects of Riel's life? Let me try, therefore, to say what I really think about Riel's mental condition. It is approximately the same as the ideas deleted from *Prophet of the New World*, but probably more coherent from having had a decade to mature.

Madness and Insanity

According to Socrates, we "do not call those mad who err in matters that lie outside the knowledge of ordinary people: madness is the name [we] give to errors in matters of common knowledge."[7] This ancient attempt at definition makes two valuable points. First, madness is generically a relational concept. That is, one is not mad in some absolute sense, as one may be six feet tall. One is mad in relation to the prevailing social construction of reality. As Carl Jung said, "To be 'crazy' is a social concept; we use social relationships and definitions in order to distinguish mental disturbances."[8] This means not that madness is purely subjective, like beauty in the eye of the beholder, but that madness is intersubjective, to be understood against the backdrop of shared beliefs and rules of conduct that characterize society. Second, madness is specifically a certain kind of deviation from the norm; it is to err "in matters of common knowledge." Other sorts of deviations have other names. One who breaks the law and violates the rights of others is a criminal. One who challenges religious orthodoxy is a heretic. One who flouts common sense is mad or crazy.

In the twentieth century secular society, the following actions are typically deemed mad: to claim to be someone else (Jesus Christ, the devil, a man from another planet); to hear voices or see visions bringing messages from some other world; to accuse family and friends of collectively plotting against oneself; to violate fundamental norms of polite adult behaviour (talking or singing to oneself, wearing strange clothes or none at all, bothering others to the point of nuisance). Note the social element in our assessment of phenomena such as voices and visions, which in other times and places have been understood as authentic messages from the divine realm.

At the level of common sense, madness refers to behaviour, on the part of those who should know better, which is strange, incomprehensible, or threatening, which appears to violate what everybody knows is real and proper. You are who you are, not someone else. You don't talk to yourself in a loud voice in a restaurant, and so on.

Problems start to arise when we try to explain these phenomena. What causes madness? Language is littered with the relics of outmoded explanations: "lunacy" (influence of the moon); "hysteria" (influence of the womb); "melancholy" (black bile). The major mode of explanation today is the "medical model," whose key term is "insanity" — literally a state of unhealthiness. Madness is usually conceptualized today as mental disease.

There is no great problem with so-called organic mental diseases, for they are clearly physical diseases of the brain and nervous system. One can demonstrate an etiology and specific lesions which cause mad behaviour. Epilepsy, syphilis, advanced alcoholism, tumours, mercury poisoning are only a few of the commonly known causes of brain disorders which profoundly affect behaviour.

But the concept of mental disease is usually applied not to such identifiable conditions of the brain but to bizarre conduct for which no physical cause can be assigned. Many psychiatrists believe that these so-called functional disorders have physical causes which will sooner or later be identified. This may be true but remains an unproven article of faith. In the meantime mental illness should be considered a metaphor, not a tested scientific explanation. There is no disease in the usual medical sense without a demonstrated physical basis. No one has said it better than Thomas Szasz:

> ... bodily illness stands in the same relation to mental illness as a defective television set stands to a bad television program. Of course, the word "sick" is often used metaphorically. Comedians tell "sick" jokes, economies become "sick," sometimes even the whole world seems "sick." But only when we call minds "sick" do we systematically mistake and strategically misinterpret metaphor for fact and send for the doctor to "cure" the "illness." It is as if a television viewer were to send for a television repairman because he dislikes the program he sees on the screen.[9]

Szasz holds that, in the absence of persuasive evidence of physical causation, crazy behaviour should be understood in the same terms — emotional, purposive, interpersonal, and moral — as behaviour in general. The Szaszian view is that madness results from "problems in living."[10] Confronted with problems they cannot solve by ordinary behaviour, people resort to extraordinary means of escape, self-defence, dominance, or aggression. The behaviour is crazy in the Socratic sense, but it is as intelligible and meaningful as any other human conduct.

The greatest difference of the Szaszian view from the conventional medical model, and the feature that makes it supremely important in discussions of Louis Riel, is its position on moral responsibility. In the medical model, crazy actions are the symptoms of mental disease. The patient is no more responsible for them than the cancer victim is responsible for his pain. The "symptoms" are things that happen to him, not actions that he performs. For Szasz, in contrast, human beings always remain responsible for their actions unless their brain is demonstrably diseased. Crazy behaviour is part of the almost infinitely varied human repertoire, and ultimately the individual must make a decision to employ such behaviour. Repetition and role playing may create such strong habits that one cannot readily retreat from the path of madness once one has started down it; but choices have been made, as much as any human actions result from choices. For Szasz, the greatest evil of the medical model is that it obscures our freedom and responsibility, in our own eyes as well as in the eyes of others. That is at the same time its greatest attraction, for freedom and responsibility can be terrible burdens that we are only too glad to lay aside.

Riel's Madness

There are three periods in Riel's life in which his biographers have seen manifestations of madness. First is a curious episode that allegedly took place in Montréal in 1865, when Louis was about twenty-one. He supposedly

> ... wrote to a clerical friend in the northwest, that he was not Louis Riel, but somebody else. He claimed that he was David Mordecai, a Jew, and was born in Marseilles, France. He came over to Canada when he was only a mere child. His appearance was so like that of Louis Riel that they might be taken for twins. *The* Louis Riel was thrown overboard from a steamer on the Mississippi and he was put in his place. So alike were they that even those in charge of the child did not detect the deception. His guardians did the foul deed, because his parents had left him immense wealth, and they wished to secure the property for themselves. He was not Louis Riel, and not the rightful heir of an immense estate, which had been acquired in this way. Being a Jew it was his duty to redeem the race, and rectify the wrongs which had been done. He was a second Saviour sent in these latter days to not only succour Jews but also Gentiles, from temporal, political and spiritual bondage.[11]

If this story is true, it seems that Louis was indeed unhinged, perhaps from grief at his father's death compounded with resentment over his expulsion from the Collège of Montréal and anxiety over his secret love affair with Marie-Julie Guernon. But it has recently been shown that this story is almost certainly just that — a story based on the mistaken interpretation of hastily seen documents.[12] So the three episodes of madness are reduced to two.

The second extends from late 1875 to early 1878. After the great disappointment of his banishment by Parliament in February 1875, Riel took increasing consolation in religious mysticism. On 8 December 1875, he underwent an experience of mystical illumination that convinced him he was the "Prophet of the New World." Believing himself endowed with a divine mission to regenerate the Catholic religion, he began to expound novel doctrines to the French Canadian friends with whom he was staying in the United States. His behaviour was emotional, excitable, even uncontrollable at times. When his friends could not reason him back to normalcy, they sent him to stay with his aunt and uncle, Lucie (Riel) and John Lee, in a suburb of Montréal. His relatives could not control him either, so they committed him to the lunatic asylum of St. Jean-de-Dieu in Longue-Pointe, 6 March 1876. His consent was neither asked for nor obtained. He was simply taken for a carriage ride which ended at the asylum.

Riel protested his sanity and fought vigorous battles with his keepers. Since the hospital authorities were also afraid his illegal presence in Montréal might be discovered and a scandal provoked, they were doubly glad to send him down river to the asylum of St. Michel-Archange at Beauport, 19 to 20 May 1876. There Riel gradually "recovered" in the sense that he became more submissive. He stopped fighting with the attendants and gave up preaching his revelations to the skeptical hospital authorities. This improvement was reported to Archbishop Taché by the chaplain of the asylum in the following medico-religious terms:

> 25 Nov. 1876
> It would be difficult to find a man more foolish and stubborn.
> 17 Feb. 1877
> Our dear Riel is not too sick, he is beginning to forget his role as prophet. He hardly prophesies any more ...
> 27 Aug. 1877
> Riel is a little better in his mental aberrations. He isn't pope any longer. He went to communion yesterday.[13]

He was finally pronounced cured "more or less"[14] and released on 23 January 1878.

According to the standard view, Riel's illness remained in remission for several years, during which he went to Montana, became an American citizen, married, fathered two children, and settled down as a school teacher at St. Peter's Mission. His insanity did not break out again until the excitement of the North-West Rebellion, when he revealed his divine mission to the credulous Métis. He caused himself to be voted a prophet by his followers and installed his new religion, complete with ceremonies and sacraments, during the uprising. He was a lunatic on the loose, but the ignorant Métis mistook the symptoms of insanity for charismatic signs of divine inspiration.

Madness was also a major issue at Riel's trial and execution. His attorneys defended him with the plea of not guilty by reason of insanity, which Riel himself rejected and did his best to refute. The jury must have believed Riel rather than his lawyers, for they convicted him of the charge of treason. At the last minute the Prime Minister appointed a secret medical commission to examine Riel and see if he was sane enough to be executed. Regardless of what the jury had determined about his mental state at the time of the Rebellion, it was legally possible that he was now irrational and should not be hanged. The medical men split their opinions, with the two English doctors reporting that Riel could be executed and the French doctor holding that he was not an "accountable being."[15] Macdonald presented these reports to the cabinet, which decided for hanging after much soul-searching on the part of the three French ministers, especially J.-A. Chapleau. After the execution, the government published a falsified version of the dissenting medical report and suppressed the original text, which was not rediscovered for half a century.[16]

Riel and the Medical Profession

A number of doctors have had occasion to form opinions about Riel's sanity, either through personal contact during his lifetime or through historical study of his case. These have included general practitioners as well as psychiatrists, or alienists as they were called in the last century. The physicians have been virtually unanimous that Riel was both medically and legally insane during large parts of his life. The only exceptions to this consensus are the doctors called by the prosecution at Riel's trial or appointed by the government to examine him afterwards.

The apparent consensus, however, masks deep and important disagreements about the nature and cause of Riel's "illness." Four main schools of thought can be distinguished, which may be termed the constitutional, the moral, the obsessional, and the psychodynamic.

The constitutional school consisted of nineteenth-century doctors who, in keeping with contemporary orthodoxy, attributed Riel's madness to physical pathology, either inherited or acquired. One representative of this school was Dr. Henry Howard, visiting physician at St. Jean-de-Dieu while Riel was kept there. Howard held that all mental deviations were either "teratological" (congenital) or "pathological" (resulting from illness).[17] The teratological deviations were idiocy, imbecility, and criminality, while insanity as such was pathological. However, the difference was not too important in practice, for Howard wished to shut away both classes of deviants in asylums (he did not favour prisons). He saw Riel as an hereditary criminal and thus a fit inmate of a mental asylum.[18] Interestingly, he reached this conclusion in 1876 when Riel had not yet been convicted of any crime and had been pardoned by Parliament for any putative offense committed in the Red River uprising.

The other constitutional view of Riel derives from Dr. Daniel Clark, a Toronto alienist who testified in Riel's defence in 1885 and also wrote about the case. Clark classified Riel as a "lunatic," i.e. a person whose symptoms occur "synchronously with brain *disease*. These peculiarities come and go with the invasion of disease and departure of the corporeal *abnormal* condition."[19] Clark did not claim to know precisely what Riel's brain disease was, but he was sure one existed. The day of the hanging, he challenged the government to perform an autopsy on Riel's brain. He was "sure that the organic changes would be found in Riel's brain even of a gross nature, after such mental storms of a lifetime."[20] He also invoked Riel's heredity. "He has now living a semi-imbecile mother with a religious bias of mind. He had an ill-educated father, whose hot passions bordered on insanity."[21] He even discovered from "those well qualified to know" that Riel was "an inveterate masturbator."[22] The only surprise is that he did not allege Riel had syphilis, although he may have expected this to be found in the brain autopsy.[23]

Although physiological interpretations of madness were dominant in late Victorian times, some alienists still clung to the moral theory, which held that madness was a matter of exaggerated and uncontrolled passions. The evidence is sketchy, but this was perhaps the view of Riel's friend Dr. E.-P. Lachapelle, who admitted him to the asylum at Longue-Pointe under the diagnosis of *folie des grandeurs*.[24] When he transferred Riel to Beauport, he filled out a form which contained further information. He wrote that there was no insanity in Riel's family, that he displayed no physical signs of disease, that he did not use drugs such as tobacco, opium, or strong drink, and that he had never suffered serious physical illness or injury. The cause of his present illness was pithily described as *ambition deçue* — "frustrated ambition," which caused him "to believe himself a prophet in religious matters."[25]

A more explicit representative of the moral school was Dr. W.W. Ireland, a well-known British alienist who wrote two books about famous cases of insanity: *The Blot on the Brain* (1885) and *Through the Ivory Gate* (1889). Ireland put Riel in the distinguished company of Joan of Arc, Emmanuel Swedenbork, and William Blake. "The wicked man," wrote Ireland,

> the man who gives way to his anger, his spite, his greed, or his lusts, is always progressing towards insanity; the insane man towards selfishness and immorality ... To live a good, prudent, and temperate life saves a man from the danger of insanity; to lead a vicious and self-indulged life leads him toward it.[26]

Lesions on the brain were the effect, not the cause, of such morally produced insanity.

Another nineteenth-century conception, compatible with either the constitutional or moral theories of insanity, was that of monomania. This had been particularly well developed in the French medical literature by authorities such as Pinel and Esquirol.[27] According to F.-X. Valade, the dissenting member of the Prime Minister's last-minute medical commission,

> A monomaniac is one who in the general run of ideas, and to all appearance, speaks and acts like a man of sound mind, but he is one whose reason is possessed by special delirious ideas, almost always the same, and by frequent hallucinations, which, for the most part may be considered as the mainsprings of his illusions.[28]

Valade saw Riel as normal in most respects, but suffering from "political religious hallucinations"[29] which made him unable to distinguish right from wrong in such matters.

This view has been shared by other psychiatrists of French background who have written about Riel. In 1886 the Paris alienist Dr. Henri Gilson wrote that the term monomania was outmoded, but his label for Riel, "chronic mania of a religious form," does not seem essentially different.[30] In 1970, two Québec psychiatrists described Riel's "chronic delirium" or "delirious and hallucinatory syndrome of a mystico-religious type."[31] Curiously, they reproached the "scientific nationalism" of Anglo-Saxon psychiatry for having obscured Riel's insanity;[32] but they cited none of the English-language psychiatric literature on Riel, which in fact is unanimous about his insanity.

All the writers of this French obsessional school have been intent on showing that Riel should be labelled insane, but none has made a serious attempt to propound an etiology for the supposed illness. The fourth group, the psychodynamic writers, have gone further in that direction. The earliest representative of this school, Dr. C.K. Clarke, after whom the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto is named, called Riel "simply a case of evolutional insanity, which would in the modern school no doubt be classed as one of the paranoiac forms of dementia."[33] He stressed that "if Riel could have been left quiet in the Jesuit school in Montana the chances are that he would never again have been heard of."[34] Situational factors were important to the flowering of the disease. Riel was a "mental weakling"[35] at all times, but he might have clung to normalcy if excitement could have been avoided.

The psychoanalytic interpretation by Dr. E.R. Markson of Toronto (1965) is far more interesting. "Riel's illness," he wrote, "may be classified as a psychosis with predominantly manic and paranoid features."[36] Typical of the psychoanalytic approach, Markson saw the roots of Riel's mental sickness in ambivalent childhood relationships with his parents.

> His delusional creations may be viewed as restitutional efforts to retain the idealized and infallible parental introjects. The unconscious rage and guilt which he felt towards the parents, and his own sense of inner corruption and badness, were expressed in his desires to reform and redeem the world ... His own badness and all bad attributes of his parents were projected on to his enemies in the external world ... His behaviour was therefore characterized by sharp vacillations between violence and passivity, humility and grandiosity, love and hate.[37]

Markson's article remains the most probing psychiatric analysis of Riel. A more recent paper, which concludes that "Riel appears to fit the grandiose sub-type of paranoid schizophrenia," summarizes the entire psychiatric literature on Riel but does not break new ground in concretely explaining the workings of his mind.[38]

All four psychiatric approaches to Riel have something to contribute. Although the constitutional school did not succeed in uncovering a verifiable physical disease, they remind us of the importance of physical factors. Many of Riel's characteristics were probably inherited from his ancestors and were not within anyone's power to change. The moral school reminds us that the desires and purposes of the so-called insane are not fundamentally different from those of other men. They share common human passions such as ambition, vanity, and fear. The French notion of monomania correctly points out that madness can be a relatively circumscribed phenomenon, leaving much of a person's life unaffected. The psychodynamic approach is potentially the most fruitful of all because, at its best, it goes beyond mere labelling to explore the individual's mental processes in reaction to his surroundings. Markson's analysis in particular draws attention to Riel's childhood in a useful way.

But even if one can learn from the psychiatric literature on Riel, all its branches share certain defects inherent in the larger enterprise of psychobiography, of which the Riel literature is a part:

1) It is overwhelmingly concerned with labelling. Regardless of their divergent and even contradictory theories, all psychiatrists who have written about Riel have ended by affirming that he was mentally ill. Whether he was a teratological criminal, a monomaniac, or a paranoid schizophrenic is ultimately secondary to the fact that he was insane and should have been confined for his own good and for the protection of society. There is both a humanitarian and a repressive side to this attitude: humanitarian because Riel would have been saved from the gallows; repressive because many of the doctors would have locked him up early in life before he had done anything punishable by law.

This insistence on labelling is connected with psychiatry's claim to scientific and institutional authority. The Riel trial was a *cause célèbre* in Canadian legal history. To forensic experts like Daniel Clark it was an opportunity to undermine the McNaghten Rules under which the trial was conducted. Alienists had repeatedly attacked the Rules for taking too narrow a view of insanity.[39] Their task was to show that the accused was not "really" a criminal but a lunatic. In his testimony at Riel's trial, Dr. Clark admitted that Riel could tell right from wrong — the essential point of the McNaghten Rules — but he criticized the Rules as "legal metaphysical distinctions" — "metaphysical subtleties that practical men in asylums know to be false."[40] His testimony as well as his extensive publications about the trial insisted that only a qualified alienist could be the judge of anyone's sanity. Ultimately the argument was over power; the psychiatric profession was determined to strip away from laymen — judges and juries — the right to declare someone mad.

This campaign, which has never been more than partly successful, is still carried on today, assisted by the literary genre of psychobiography.[41] Retrospective analysis of historical figures, finding them mentally ill, supports the institutional authority of psychiatry by advancing its scientific authority. Documenting mental illness in the great men of the past reinforces the self-serving claim of the mental health establishment that mental disease is always and everywhere a major problem.

Despite protestations to the contrary, the labelling is always demeaning. Freud painted Dostoyevsky as a latent sado-masochist and Leonardo da Vinci as a latent homosexual.[42] Erikson saw Martin Luther as a neurotic trying to escape a tyrannical father.[43] Esberey writes of Mackenzie King: "The analysis of King's personality is to a considerable extent a study of neurotic tendencies."[44] Denigration is inevitable to the extent that the psychobiographer sees a subject in the grip of uncontrollable forces rather than a person making choices.

2) Psychobiographies are notorious for being poor history. The writers, influenced by psychiatric models of alleged universal validity, twist their

evidence to validate their models.[45] Moreover, when the authors are psychiatrists, they are generally not conversant with the historical method of research based on critical analysis of primary sources. Psychiatric writers think of themselves as scientists citing the "findings" of earlier researchers. Thus the psychiatric literature on Riel is full of demonstrable factual errors and improbable legends. Many of these, like the David Mordecai story, go back to Dr. Daniel Clark and other early psychiatric writers. The situation becomes worse as time goes on because factual errors and apocryphal anecdotes assume credibility through frequent repetition and citation. The more industrious the psychiatric writer, the more damage he is likely to do, for he will uncover more unverified material and weave it into his analysis. Thus the most recent psychiatric study of Riel affirms the following non-events: that he believed himself to be David Mordecai in 1865; that he had a vision on a mountaintop on 18 December 1874; that he gave $1000 to a beggar on 6 December 1875; that he was arrested for bizarre conduct in Washington, D.C., after his release from Beauport.[46]

In spite of these evident weaknesses in the literature, historians have exhibited an unwarranted deference to psychiatric opinion. Properly conscious that history is not an exact science and perhaps intimidated by the scientific pretensions of psychiatry, historians have been too ready to accept Riel's insanity as a "scientific fact."[47] In reality, insanity is a label put upon Riel by the psychiatric profession as it tries to enhance its own authority. It does not arise from careful observation, original documentary research, or theory validated by conventional scientific procedures.

A Non-Psychiatric View of Riel

From late 1875 on, Riel was certainly mad from a common sense point of view. He thought he was a divinely inspired prophet and claimed to receive direct revelations from God, the angels and saints. He advanced bizarre novelties in religious matters such as polygamy and incest. At least at times, his behaviour was excited and uncontrollable. We can call his condition madness if we wish, but we must realize that the term explains nothing at all. It merely denotes that he was far removed from reality as perceived by his contemporaries. The interesting question is how he got to that point.

Here we diverge sharply from the medical model and the literalized metaphor of mental illness. There was no disease which descended upon or emerged within Riel, making his behaviour unintelligible to others and rendering him unaccountable for his actions. His madness was a direct continuation of the direction he had given to his life in the preceding years.

One of Riel's predominant passions was the desire to distinguish himself. He had been marked out at an early age to return to the North-West as the first Métis missionary priest after studying at the Collège of Montréal. When that plan miscarried, he had sought and temporarily achieved recognition as the "founder of Manitoba."[48] But the years 1870–75 brought only political disappointments culminating in the obscurity of exile.

Riel's other great passion, already evident in his youthful poetry, was the desire for justice.[49] By 1875, he was unalterably convinced that he and the Métis had been wronged by Canada. His passion for recognition and his passion for justice converged in a new conception of himself as divinely inspired "prophet, priest-king, and infallible pontiff."[50] Deprived of greatness in the organized Church and in Canadian politics, he would wield the charismatic authority of God's grace. He would announce to the world that he and the Métis were only in temporary eclipse, that divine Providence would punish their oppressors and restore the Métis to their rightful place of honour.

For Riel to have chosen to play the role of prophet seems particularly crazy to us living in a secular and skeptical era in which any form of religious enthusiasm is immediately suspect. But Riel's ultramontane Catholicism, with its notion of Providence guiding the world, was as real to him as the laws of gravitation are to us. His religious tradition was full of prophetic examples both ancient and modern. The prophetic role in the Judeo-Christian tradition is almost as well defined as a theatrical role in a play. One hears voices and sees visions, expounds divine mysteries to the ignorant, denounces the sins of the wicked, promises redemption to the faithful, and works miracles to validate the entire performance. As recently as 1858, the Virgin Mary was believed to have appeared to Bernadette of Lourdes, beginning a cult which persists to this day. It was certainly arrogant of Riel to have thought of himself as God's chosen prophet, but it was not irrational, given the network of assumptions he shared with other ultramontane Catholics. They all believed firmly in God, Providence, miracles, and revelation, both public and private. They also believed that the Pope was infallible and that the French Canadians as a people had a special mission to evangelize North America.[51] Riel's overweening ambition led him to apply these beliefs to himself and his people: he would work miracles, he was receiving revelation, he was infallible, the Métis were a chosen people. This looked bizarre and even mad to his French Canadian contemporaries, as it does to us, but for different reasons. We probably regard it as absurdly irrational; they saw it as absurdly proud. Dr. Lachapelle's diagnosis of *folie des grandeurs* resulting from *ambition deçue* was an accurate assessment of Riel's spiritual condition. Riel himself saw the issue as spiritual rather than medical, as illustrated in this poem written in the asylum at Beauport:

> Une médecine ennemie
> Travaille, en tâtonnant, ma chair presqu'endormie.
> Afin de mieux montrer ce qu'ils peuvent sur nous
> En laissant Dieu pour eux-mêmes
> Et pour d'orgueilleux systèmes
> Les médécins du corps m'ont mis parmi les fous.
>
> Je les entends jaser de physiologie
> Mais ils ne parlent pas de la psycologie [*sic*].
> L'âme et le [*sic*] chair pour eux sont au même niveau.[52]

One does not have to share Riel's vainglorious belief in his own inspiration to agree with his views on the doctors who tried to deal with the sin of pride as if it were a medical rather than a moral fact.

Riel never lost his conviction that he was divinely inspired. His years in the asylum, however, taught him to be more cautious about saying things that would make others regard him as crazy. After his release, he cultivated a rich interior life of visions and mystical speculations while presenting an external appearance of normality and conformity to Church discipline. His revelation to the Métis of his novel doctrine in 1885, with his attempt to found a new religion during the Rebellion, was not a relapse into insanity after a period of remission. It was the seizure of the opportunity for which he had long been waiting. Presented to his own people, his message seemed unusual but not insane. They saw no compelling reason why he should not be a prophet and they a chosen people. Had they all gone crazy together? A better way to put it is that a special situation had emerged in which Riel could powerfully influence the social construction of reality. His views as to what counted as truth and who counted as an authority could prevail because of his great prestige among the Métis. In a nice reversal of 1876, the priests were locked up. Had there been any alienists around, they would have been locked up too.

Clausewitz defined war as the continuation of politics by other means. Riel's religious madness — his theomania as the doctors of the nineteenth century sometimes called it — was also an extension of politics, a way of achieving power over others and glory in the eyes of the world. It was a continuation of his earlier life, not an inexplicable attack of mental illness.

The corollary of this analysis is that Riel must be held, as he always wished to be, accountable for all his actions. He became a prophet through a series of choices freely and enthusiastically made. That he started a rebellion because he thought God willed it does not make him any less responsible for his actions than are rebels who act in the name of history or of the proletariat.

Responsibility is the ultimate question. One of Riel's great virtues, the redeeming side of his monumental vanity, is that he was always willing to accept responsibility for his deeds. That is why he surrendered to face trial when he could easily have escaped to the United States after the fall of Batoche. We should learn from his courage.

The desire to label Riel insane, as if it were an ultimate explanation, often stems from a desire to evade moral responsibility. In 1876, Riel's relatives and friends called him insane and committed him to an asylum as a way of avoiding an embarrassing dilemma. If they took Riel as he wished to be taken, they had to assess his claim to prophetic inspiration. They either had to join him in breaking with their traditional religious authorities, or they had to condemn the pride he had shown in challenging the Church. Either way, they would lose the convenient symbol of French Canadian nationalism that he had become.

Similarly, who called Riel insane in 1885? The alienists, the defence counsel, the missionaries in Regina *after* he abjured his heresies, political Liberals, and French Canadian nationalists. All were united by the desire to save him from the gallows, but for different reasons. The alienists wanted to advance their own scientific and professional authority, the defence counsel wanted to win a big case, the missionaries wanted to protect a lost sheep who had returned to the fold, the Liberals wanted to embarrass the government, and the French Canadian nationalists wanted to defend the strategic position of their race within Confederation.

Calling Riel insane served all these purposes by diverting attention from what he had done and why he had done it. To focus on those questions requires moral judgement. One must decide whether Riel had good reason for raising the standard of revolt and whether the government had good reason to hang him after crushing his revolt.

The issues remain the same today. Those who ask whether Riel was "really crazy" are in effect looking for a way out of this moral dilemma. If Riel was "really crazy," the whole business is much less painful. The Métis can have their grievances, while the violence can be attributed to Riel, who after all cannot be blamed since he was not responsible for his actions. The government can be blamed for hanging Riel as well as for not responding to the Métis complaints, but the suppression of the Rebellion by armed force can be accepted as a necessary restoration of order.

The myth of Riel's insanity is made to order for the contemporary liberal who does not want to face some of history's sterner truths: that civilization expands into the territory of more primitive peoples, that the Natives will fight to the death to defend what they believe is theirs, and that the civilized society will use its superior force to uphold its control; also, that the civilized society is not necessarily inhumane in its treatment of aboriginal populations, that Native leaders are subject to the same vices as the politicians of all nations and do not always serve their own peoples well. These are some of the great and perplexing problems brought before us by the Riel Rebellions. To solve these problems with the myth of the leader's insanity is only a convenient escape and ultimately no solution at all.

NOTES

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14 Testimony of Dr. François Roy at Riel's trial, in Desmond Morton, ed., *The Queen v Louis Riel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 246.

15 F.-X. Valade to J.A. Macdonald, 8 November 1885. Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), MG 26 A, 42650-51.

16 George F.G. Stanley discovered the falsification of Valade's telegraphic report. See his *The Birth of Western Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961; first published 1936), 450-51, note 11. Valade's longer report was first published in Thomas Flanagan, "The Riel 'Lunacy Commission': The Report of Dr. Valade," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 46 (1976): 108-27. See also *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered*, 135-45.

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An Opportunity Lost: The Initiative of the Reserve Agricultural Programme in the Prairie West

Noel Dyck

1

Western Canadians generally regard the development of the prairie West between 1870 and 1905 as a proud chapter in the building of this nation. The many centennial anniversaries commemorated in the region in the last fifteen years or planned for the next twenty bear witness to the popularity of heroic interpretations of this earlier period. Yet these tributes to the history of nation-building and pioneering on the prairies tend to overlook that the achievements registered by some of our forefathers during this period were offset by the losses borne by others. One as yet little-recognized cost of the settlement period was the federal government's mishandling of prairie Indians' attempts to take up agricultural pursuits following the disappearance of the buffalo from the Canadian plains in 1879. Rather than aiding Indians to make the transition to new forms of self-sufficiency, the so-called "humanitarian" policies pursued by the federal government actually sabotaged Indians' efforts to preserve their autonomy and make a viable transition to new ways of life.

This paper examines the social, political and economic forces that led to the implementation of the reserve agricultural programme in the prairie West prior to 1885. It questions the cultural determinism implicit in the commonly held notion that the programme failed mainly because aboriginal cultures and personality types were unequal to the demands of a settled, agricultural way of life.[1] The disappearance of the buffalo from the Canadian prairies did not in itself doom Indians to become subordinate figures in a coercive system of reserve administration. There is evidence not only of the willingness of prairie Indians to embark upon an agricultural way of life,[2] but also of their continuing concern from the time of the negotiation of the treaties in the mid-1870s to prepare for this eventuality. How and why did the reserve agricultural programme mounted between 1880 and 1885 frustrate this objective?

Far from being historically inevitable, this outcome was primarily the product of the arbitrary political relationship imposed upon Indians by government officials. The opportunity that existed in the 1870s and early 1880s to build a cooperative relationship between Indians and government, a relationship that could have fostered the establishment of self-supporting and self-governing Indian communities, was lost for want of commitment on the part of government officials to these objectives. The events of 1885 sealed the fate of the reserve agricultural programme and provided the pretext for the imposition of a coercive system of reserve administration that lasted well into the twentieth century. Federal officials' power to manage outsiders' access to and understandings of this sphere of relations comprised another essential element of this destructive system of control, the effects of which have still not been clearly recognized, let alone satisfactorily resolved. This was not the arrangement that either Indians or government representatives sought when the treaties were signed. Why did it occur?

2

The transfer of Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories to the Dominion of Canada in 1870 marked the first step towards the integration of this vast area into the new nation. A major portion of the young country's energies in the remaining decades of the nineteenth century would be absorbed by the demands of Euro-Canadian settlement of the region. Throughout this period relations between Native peoples and the growing non-Native population comprised a fundamental concern for federal authorities.

Ottawa's dealings with prairie Indians reflected a number of factors, only a few of which can be mentioned here. To begin with the federal government inherited from the pre-confederation period in eastern Canada a comprehensive Indian policy that promoted "protection, civilization and assimilation."[3] The main features of the policy applied in the prairie West were already well developed in 1870: the practice of the Crown alone accepting the surrender of Indian lands; the establishment of Indian reserves as a means of transforming Indians into settled and self-sufficient agriculturalists; and the eventual goal of eliminating Indian reserves and communities through the process of enfranchisement and individual allotment of Indian lands. A second factor was officials' desire to escape what were seen as the unnecessary expenses and excesses of the American government's dealings with its western Indians. The substantial costs incurred by the American army in fighting a series of protracted and expensive Indian wars horrified Canadian government leaders who were determined to adopt a more "humanitarian" and economically prudent approach to western settlement. Third, a far-reaching ecological transformation took place on the prairies in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and this was to have dramatic effects upon Indian-government relations. By 1870 it was recognized that the buffalo herds were declining rapidly; year by year increasing numbers of Indians came to accept that agricultural settlement of the prairie West would eventually overtake and displace the buffalo-based economy. What was not appreciated, especially by the federal government, was just how abruptly this would happen. A fourth factor that influenced the conduct of Indian administration throughout this period, but particularly in the 1880s, was the federal government's already problematic pattern of dealing with the Métis.

The negotiation of the prairie treaties, that vital first stage in Indian-government dealings, indicated just how substantially government's and Indians' interests differed. The initiative for treaty-making came from Indian leaders whose people were determined to prevent Euro-Canadian settlement of their lands until their rights had been recognized.[4] While the federal government intended the "numbered" treaties to serve primarily as instruments for the surrender of Indian lands to the Crown, Indians approached these proceedings as the preliminary step in a longer-term process of developing a workable relationship with newcomers whom they would allow into their territories under certain conditions. Federal leaders viewed settlement of the prairie West as a means of accomplishing the economic integration of Canada as a nation. Railway construction and large-scale settlement depended, however, upon the fabrication of a political and administrative infrastructure which, in turn, awaited the forging of a viable relationship between the new government and indigenous peoples. On the other hand, prairie Indians sought to build formal links with federal authorities so they might begin to prepare for the future. From their perspective, an integral part of treaty-making would be to achieve a commitment from government to assist them when they would no longer be able to support themselves from the hunt and would have to become farmers.

Beginning with these quite different interests and assumptions and conducting their consultations usually in a matter of days through interpreters, it is easy to see how different interpretations of what had been agreed upon in these sessions might have emerged.[5] Even within government circles the signing of treaties could be construed as involving quite different options, as was indicated by Commissioner Provencher in a report to the Secretary of State:

> Treaties may be made with them simply with a view to the extinction of their rights, by agreeing to pay them a sum and afterwards abandon them to themselves. On the other side, they may be instructed, civilized and led to a mode of life more in conformity with the new position of this country, and accordingly make them good, industrious and useful citizens.
>
> Under the first system the Indians will remain in their condition of ignorance and inferiority, and as soon as the facilities for hunting and fishing disappear, they will become mendicants, or be obliged to seek refuge in localities inaccessible to immigration or cultivation.
>
> Under the second system, on the contrary, they will learn sufficient for themselves, and to enable them to pass from a state of tutelage, and to do without assistance from the government.[6]

Yet statements such as this one, phrased in the emerging rhetoric of federal Indian administration, suggested a straightforwardness of approach and a purity of motives that were sometimes conspicuously absent from federal actions.

Indian leaders had definite ideas about what they expected of government. The Cree who negotiated Treaty Six refused to sign the document until government commissioners agreed to a number of conditions, including an undertaking:

> That in the event hereafter of the Indians comprised within this treaty being overtaken by any pestilence, or by a general famine, the Queen... will grant to to the Indians assistance of such character and to such an extent as her Chief Superintendent of

> Indian Affairs shall deem necessary and sufficient to relieve the Indians from the calamity that shall have befallen them.[7]

This clause, along with another stipulating that the government would grant provisions to Indians during the initial period when they would settle on reserves and begin cultivation, underlined Indian leaders' determination to establish ground rules for the world as it would be without buffalo. The treaty negotiations did not, however, resolve the concerns of several Cree leaders who were determined to obtain more substantial recognition from government representatives of Indians' right to autonomy. Thus, a number of bands remained outside of the treaties, although government representatives doggedly sought their adhesion to the treaties in subsequent years. In the meantime the buffalo still existed, albeit in ever-declining numbers. Federal officials showed as little interest in preparing for the agricultural experiment that lay ahead as they did in responding to requests from Indians and other prairie residents that steps be taken to conserve the buffalo as a subsistence resource for as long as possible.[8]

In spite of constant warnings regarding the precipitous decline of the buffalo, the suddenness and finality of their disappearance from the Canadian prairies in 1879 surprised local observers and federal officials alike.[9] Both the Cree and the Blackfeet had been reported to be in a starving condition during the spring and summer of 1878. By the next summer their state had become desperate. One government official reported that the Blackfeet were:

> ... selling their Horses for a mere song, eating gophers, mice, and for the first time have hunted the Antelope and nearly killed them all off... Strong young men were now so weak that some of them could hardly walk. Others who last winter were fat and hearty are mere skin and bone.[10]

The critical situation facing prairie Indians generated anxiety throughout the territory concerning how they would respond to this calamity. While remarking upon the amazing restraint exercised by Indians, reports from settlers and officials on the prairies left no doubt that Indians expected federal authorities to honour the obligations entered into only a few years earlier. The time for government action had arrived.

The necessity of supplying prairie Indians with at least limited provisions had been recognized in March 1879 when the government expended ten thousand dollars to provide temporary relief to Indians at Battleford, Duck Lake and Qu'Appelle.[11] The situation steadily worsened during the spring and summer, prompting the convening of a council of regional representatives of various agencies in August. This "starvation council" agreed that fears of a general famine were only too well founded and recommended that unless Indians were rationed by government during the coming winter, there would be dire consequences not only for the Indians but also for the settlers scattered throughout the prairie West. Under the circumstances the government had little choice but to accept this advice and incur a large and curiously unanticipated expenditure. Alarmed by the prospect of footing a burgeoning appropriation for feeding the Indians of the North-West, the government eagerly took up its treaty commitments to help Indians to turn to agricultural pursuits. Federal officials spoke bravely of mounting a reserve agricultural programme that would make prairie Indians self-sufficient in a few years.

3

Before turning to the specifics of the agricultural programme mounted in the early 1880s, it may be useful to identify some of the factors that might have been expected to limit its success. To begin with, agriculture was still in its infancy in the prairie West. Outside of the Red River settlement there had been only limited agricultural experimentation by fur traders, missionaries, Indians and settlers. Detailed practical knowledge about soils and growing conditions simply did not exist; seed types and cultivation practices suited to the prairie West would not become readily available until the turn of the century. Moreover, the Department of Indian Affairs was ill-prepared, either in terms of administrative infrastructure or of practical experience, for the demands of overseeing a large-scale development programme. The expense of the programme, including the cost of provisioning Indians as they turned their hands to ploughing, was further increased by the high charges involved in transporting goods and implements into the area.

Closely related to these factors were a pair of ideological considerations that conspired to plague the operation of the reserve agricultural programme from the outset. On the one hand there was an enormous reluctance among Canadian politicians during this age of neo-mercantilist economic policy to provide support of any kind to needy individuals.[12] Charity was reckoned to be the responsibility of families and churches, not of governments. It was essentially the possibility of an armed rising in the prairie West — a risk that threatened state-supported investments in railway construction and western development — that compelled federal authorities to supply rations to starving Indians. Yet throughout the early years of the programme, government officials sought to resolve their abiding moral qualms by assuring themselves and the public that Indians would be made to work for every pound of rations they received.

On the other hand, federal leaders from time to time expressed fundamental doubts about the programme that was supposed to make prairie Indians self-sufficient in a few years. Even in the course of promoting the programme in Parliament the Prime Minister expressed misgivings about whether Indians could suddenly be converted from a nomadic, hunting way of life to a sedentary, agrarian existence.[13] To assuage these doubts federal officials referred to the reserve agricultural programme as an act of Christian humanitarianism, implying that it ought to be judged in terms of its motives rather than its results.

In light of these constraints and misgivings, the initial results of the programme were cautiously favourable. During the summer of 1880 over 11,000 Indians settled upon reserves, built houses and broke some 4,600 acres of land for cultivation. The harvest that year yielded moderate though promising quantities of wheat, oats, barley and potatoes. Included in the Indian commissioner's report was an extract that described the progress achieved that summer on Red Pheasant's reserve near Battleford:

> The crop on this reserve was magnificent. The potato yield was very heavy... The barley and wheat I am happy to say came to

> maturity. The turnips and beets cannot be surpassed, but the carrots, owing to not being thinned in time are in some cases small. These Indians are intelligent, peacefully inclined and good workers.[14]

Yet in spite of the optimism generated by initial farming operations, there was no question of discontinuing the rationing of bands settled on reserves. Though a few of the bands were in a position to eke out an existence, Commissioner Dewdney reported that eight-tenths of the Indians of the North-West were helpless.[15] Nevertheless, opposition criticism in Parliament of expenditures on Indians made the government acutely sensitive to the political desirability of maintaining economy.

This concern with economy, combined with misgivings about the merit of the government granting "charity" to Indians, often gave rise to conflicting purposes within federal Indian administration. As early as 1881 the Minister of Finance recommended that Indians be employed in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in order to offset ration expenditures.[16] Although this measure was not adopted, rations for Indians were initially restricted on average to three-quarters of a pound of meat and three-quarters of a pound of flour per person per day for a per capita daily cost of eight cents.[17] This was significantly less than the fifty cents per day allowed by the Department for the feeding of each of its white farm labourers.[18] Moreover, the Department insisted that Indians not be given something for nothing: "the system pursued in affording relief to the Indians is calculated to accustom them to habits of industry and at the same time to teach them to depend on their own efforts of subsistence."[19]

Government spokesmen steadfastly maintained that while the rationing of the Indians in the North-West would initially incur great expenditure, the Indians would within two or three years achieve some degree of self-sufficiency. For instance, in an application to the Privy Council in 1881 for a supplementary grant to meet departmental over-expenditures in the North-West, the Prime Minister predicted that that year's harvest would be sufficient to feed Indians settled on reserves for three, if not four, months of the coming year.[20] Yet departmental officials privately observed that ration expenses and overall costs would not soon decrease, but would in all probability rise during the next few years with the settlement of more bands on reserves.[21] These less sunny projections were, in effect, ignored in official pronouncements which indicated that the programme was for the most part proceeding satisfactorily in the North-West.

Prior to 1882 participation in the reserve farming programme was largely restricted to bands residing within the boundaries of Treaty Six and in the eastern section of Treaty Four. There remained in the southern and western sections of the North-West a substantial Indian population — including the followers of Big Bear in the Cypress Hills region and, further west, the Blackfeet — whose involvement in agricultural pursuits was either limited or non-existent. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the North-West Territories actively encouraged the Blackfeet to continue hunting in American territory for several years after the buffalo had disappeared from the Canadian plains. By offering them rations to supplement their returns from hunting, the Commissioner estimated that he had saved the government at least $100,000 over a two-year period. In the meantime, government efforts and resources were to be concentrated on developing existing Indian reserves.

Eventually the many Indians who had gathered in the Cypress Hills region in order to mount periodic hunting forays into the United States while maintaining pressure upon the Canadian government to grant them what would have amounted to an Indian territory were compelled to settle on geographically dispersed reserves in the northern and eastern sections of the Territories.[22] Yet even on established reserves, the farming programme was not proceeding according to plan. In spite of promising efforts in Treaties Four and Six, the Indians there were far from being self-sufficient by 1883. In Treaty Seven agricultural development had only been half-heartedly attempted by the Department with the result that the ration expenditures there were more than twice as large as in the other two treaties combined.[23] Although agricultural reports for the North-West superintendency indicated progress both in terms of the amount of new land being cultivated and in crop returns, the necessity of providing rations to Indians settled on reserves remained.[24]

It has been suggested that the "failure" of the government's agricultural policy to meet its original objectives was due to the "restlessness ... inherent in the Indian disposition" and to Indians' "dislike of uncongenial work."[25] In fact, agents and instructors generally reported favourably on the efforts shown by bands that had undertaken to farm; to cite but one example, a farming instructor in the File Hills Agency reported to Commissioner Dewdney in the spring of 1884 that "the men kept the oxen steadily at work and three families who came last fall have broken up enough land with their hoes for gardens and potatoes."[26] Their efforts were in sharp contrast to the short rations and reneging on treaty commitments that became characteristic of federal Indian administration.[27] Considering that prairie agriculture was then in its infancy, that the development of suitable crops, farming techniques and agricultural equipment for the northern climate still lay ahead,[28] and that the Department had not provided Indians with sufficient implements and supplies to serve all those who were prepared to farm, the progress realized was not inconsiderable. Yet the drive for economy in Indian administration systematically retarded agricultural development. For instance, departmental officials spent three years considering the cheapest method of constructing a grist mill in the western district of Treaty Six. In the meantime Indians in the area remained over a hundred miles from the nearest mill where their grain could be milled into flour.

The Conservative government's fixation with economy in Indian administration was not, however, unrepresentative of Canadian political thinking of that day. Indeed, according to the Liberal opposition, which maintained that the Crown's responsibilities extended only to meeting the narrowly stated specific terms of the treaties, the Conservative programme was generous. In any case, Prime Minister Macdonald assured the House of Commons that the government was doing its best to keep expenditures low, reducing Indians to one-half and one-quarter rations and "refusing food until the Indians are on the verge of starvation."[29] The enforcement of this policy resulted in starvation[30] and a rapidly increasing mortality rate among prairie Indians.

Other measures taken to achieve economies in federal Indian administration required more elaborate explanations by government officials. One of the Liberals' longstanding targets had been the supply farms established to produce as large as possible a portion of the food supplies needed to ration Indians. These units were not, however, able to feed even the white labourers who operated them, let alone produce a surplus. Curiously, the conclusion that if white farmers had not yet come to terms with prairie agricultural conditions, then Indian farmers could hardly be expected to have done so did not seem to occur to either the government or the opposition. The eventual closure of the supply farms was justified on the basis that these units had really been intended to demonstrate proper field husbandry techniques and that Indians on nearby reserves had by now had sufficient opportunity to see how farming should be conducted.[31]

In 1882 and 1883 criticism of expenditures on Indians increased as the country slid into economic recession. A decline in government revenues that began in the last quarter of 1882 marked a turning point in the reserve agricultural programme. Expenditures on Indian affairs in the North-West that had reached a peak of $1,106,961 in 1882 were reduced to $1,099,796 the following year and to $1,025,675 in 1884,[32] even though the number of Indians resident on reserves increased in each of these years. As a result of these cutbacks and an accompanying reshuffling of departmental spending, provisions for destitute Indians in the North-West Territories were reduced by more than $90,000 or 15 percent between 1882 and 1884.[33] There was a surprising lack of hesitation within the upper echelons of government in making this reduction so crucial to the state of affairs in the North-West. In September 1883 the Prime Minister instructed Commissioner Dewdney that expenses in the North-West were to be kept down as much as possible, although "life and property must be protected."[34] Dewdney's willingness to comply with Macdonald's request marked a complete reversal of the stand he had taken two years earlier when he had confidently predicted that, although expenditures would be high, the final results of the reserve agricultural programme would justify their cost.[35]

4

The response of Indians in the North-West Territories to the reserve agricultural programme reflected the geographical and cultural diversity of the region as well as the leaders' differing views of what would be best for their people in the present and the future. Crowfoot, a Blackfoot chief, pursued a policy of cooperating with the government from the signing of the treaties. When he first met Dewdney in the summer of 1879, Crowfoot greatly impressed the newly appointed Indian Commissioner, who noted that Crowfoot had spoken "very well, and reasonably."[36] Although Crowfoot declared a willingness to farm, he informed Dewdney that unless the government could bring back the buffalo, it would have to feed the Blackfeet. The Commissioner encouraged Crowfoot and his people to continue hunting in American territory for the next two years. When the Blackfeet did settle on reserves in 1881, Crowfoot once again stated his readiness to take up farming as long as his people were provided sufficient assistance by the government.

Other Indian leaders pursued less patient courses of action. The Cree chief Poundmaker had been among the first to settle on a reserve in 1879. In the following two years he and his band made considerable progress in breaking land and constructing buildings, working "like Trojans," their farming instructor reported.[37] Nevertheless, the government's ration policy, balanced as it was between keeping the Indians from starvation on the one hand and maintaining economy on the other, offered scant encouragement for their efforts. Discouraged by the treatment accorded his people, Poundmaker in the spring of 1881 sent out messengers to different parts of the North-West, inviting the chiefs to gather in Battleford that summer so they might press the government for better terms.[38] Bands in the Battleford district refused to seed crops that year and the agent was told that unless he issued rations they would take the cattle out on the plains and kill them for food. In June, Poundmaker and part of his band left their reserve and headed south to confer with Indians in the Cypress Hills. When Indians were granted an opportunity to discuss their grievances with the Governor-General during his tour of the North-West later that summer, Poundmaker outlined the difficulties and hardships they were encountering on the reserves:

> Ever since the white man made the Treaty the white man always talks of how they are to make their living. I am striving hard to work on my farm that my children may benefit but, I am not accustomed to work on a farm and am short of implements. I mean the same thing used by the white man. A reaper, mower, that is what we want... We cannot work in the winter. It is cold and we are naked. There is much sickness on my reserve and I would like a Doctor there.[39]

In the fall of 1881 Poundmaker returned to his reserve and once again engaged in farming. Taking this as a sign of submission, the authorities largely ignored his requests. In 1883 Poundmaker again left his reserve to meet with other Indian leaders, an action that Assistant Indian Commissioner Reed explained as part of an effort by Poundmaker to make himself "a great man" in the eyes of the other Indians.[40] Reed's suggestion that Poundmaker be deposed as chief of his band if he did not set a better example to his people demonstrated no more understanding of Cree political processes than of the reasons for Poundmaker's discontent with reserve life.

While Crowfoot and Poundmaker worked from within the treaty structure to achieve improved conditions for their people, Big Bear, the Cree chief whom Dewdney considered the most influential Indian on the prairies,[41] chose to remain outside of the treaty for six years while conducting a campaign to obtain greater autonomy for Indians. His efforts were not in vain, for as long as he remained on the plains, demanding more liberal terms from the government officials who regularly sought his adhesion to Treaty Six, he demonstrated to those Indians already settled on reserves that they were not obliged to leave their fate in the hands of the Department of Indian Affairs. Nor could the government afford to ignore Big Bear. Year after year officials sought his acceptance of the treaty, and with equal persistence, Big Bear refused to give it. Meeting with Lieutenant-Governor Laird in 1878, Big Bear, who acted as a spokesman for both treaty and non-treaty Indians, reiterated that the treaty did not furnish enough for the people to live on.[42] The following year Big Bear held conferences in the southern part of the territories with both Crowfoot and the Sioux chief, Sitting Bull.

Between 1879 and 1882, Big Bear and his band travelled between the Cypress Hills and the Judith Basin in Montana in pursuit of the buffalo. But as the herds dwindled and the Cypress Hill Indians faced starvation, leaders such as Piapot, Little Pine and Lucky Man fell victim to Dewdney's relentless campaign to drive them and their followers to settle on reserves. Eventually Big Bear too succumbed to these pressures and signed an adhesion to Treaty Six, although he did not pick a reserve until 1884. While he failed in his efforts to locate his reserve adjacent to other Cree reserves in the Battleford area, a proposal that would have created a substantial Indian territory with a concentrated, politically significant Indian population, his opposition to government policies continued. During these years he travelled from district to district, discussing with chiefs in different areas how government might be forced to respond to Indian demands. Officials took considerable care in handling Big Bear and even broke the "no work, no food" rule in the case of his band.[43]

Late in 1883 the Department learned that Big Bear and other Cree leaders were organizing a large gathering of Indians to be held in the Battleford district in 1884. This council took on even greater significance as the reduction of government expenditures for the North-West began to take effect. The integration of the southern Indians into the reserve agricultural programme during the summer of 1883 should have resulted in a proportionately larger appropriation for the Department of Indian Affairs. Instead, a general reduction in costs was initiated and rations were cut back. Reaction in the North-West to the reduced ration issues came swiftly. The farming instructor at Fort Pitt was threatened at knife point when he refused to grant rations to an Indian who had just returned from an unsuccessful hunting expedition.[44] Indians in the Crooked Lakes district seized a government storehouse and distributed the rations it contained. Their leader, Yellow Calf, explained to a police officer that, "when they stole the provisions their women and children were starving ... and that they were well armed and might just as well die as be starved by the Government."[45] A police patrol sent to the reserve encountered a gathering of Indians determined to protect those who had taken food that they considered to be properly their own. Bloodshed was only narrowly averted.[46]

The Crooked Lakes incident and the threat of further Indian agitation alarmed Department officials both in Ottawa and in the North-West. Officials in the North-West informed the Prime Minister that Indians would probably congregate in large numbers in the southern area as well as in the Battleford district that summer,[47] and predicted that there would be a strong inclination for the Indians to kill their cattle if the "no work, no food" rule was adhered to. It was recommended that every effort be taken to prevent these gatherings, including arresting some of the leaders:

> ... the law might have to be strained a little to meet a particular case, but in the interests of the country at large as well as the Indians themselves such a course I think would be advisable.

> A magistrate before whom these Indians might appear, if at all conversant with Indian character could readily discern his proper course.[48]

It was decided in Ottawa to adopt a dual policy of issuing somewhat more liberal rations to those Indians working on the reserves, while at the same time strengthening the Mounted Police.[49]

The long awaited Indian councils, held in 1884 in both the northern and southern areas, amply demonstrated the inadequacy of this response as a means of keeping Indians working on the reserves, let alone for satisfying their demands. A police patrol sent to arrest Piapot, the chief organizer of the council to be held in the South, found itself surrounded by armed warriors. Police and government representatives were forced to permit the planned council and thirst dance to proceed as planned.[50] In the course of another council, staged several weeks later on Poundmaker's reserve, the matter of rationing policy came to the fore when a farming instructor refused to grant provisions to an Indian from a visiting band. This provoked an incident that almost ended in a pitched battle between the North West Mounted Police and the assembled Indians.[51] According to police reports, except for the efforts of Big Bear and several other chiefs to avoid trouble, the showdown would almost certainly have sparked the massacre of the police party.[52]

The interruption of this council by the incident delayed the working out of a coordinated plan for further political agitation. Nevertheless, Big Bear persevered in his efforts to unite the Cree in opposition to the government's administration of the reserve agricultural programme. The next month he and chiefs in the Carlton district met with the recently returned Métis leader, Louis Riel. This council, held near Duck Lake, marked a crucial stage in the development of a unified Indian political movement in the North-West. Big Bear presented the Indians' reasons for dissatisfaction with government: his people had surrendered their lands and settled on reserves in response to the government's promise that they would achieve a better way of life through farming; the government had not kept its promises and therefore, a new and more generous settlement would have to be negotiated. It was also agreed that a council including bands from every section of the North-West would meet the following summer to demand better terms from the government. Differences between the political aims of the Indians and the Métis, however, limited the council to achieving only an exchange of general statements of sympathy between the Cree leaders and Riel.[53]

That same summer Crowfoot and several other chiefs from Treaty Seven travelled to Regina to present the Commissioner with various requests, including one that the flour ration not be further reduced.[54] Although Dewdney suggested in a letter to the Prime Minister that these Indians had "no substantial grievances," he endeavoured to appease Crowfoot through a number of inexpensive measures. Crowfoot visited the North-West Territorial Council in session and was awarded fifty dollars by it "as a mark of the esteem in which his nation is held." The chiefs were then taken to Winnipeg on the newly constructed railway in an effort to demonstrate to them "the supremacy of the white man and the utter impossibility of contending against his power." The solution Dewdney proposed to the Prime Minister to resolve ration grievances in Treaty Seven was that greater allowances of tea and tobacco be issued to working Indians. The cost of the tea could, he suggested, be made up by a corresponding reduction from other rations. In the meantime, the rations issued in Treaty Seven remained inadequate as the Department provided a daily per capita ration of less than five ounces of flour.[55]

An unusual calm fell over Indian administration in the North-West following the turbulent summer of 1884. Although there had been a near total crop failure in the North-West that year, the autumn annuity payments were carried out without difficulty. Still, the Department received numerous warnings throughout the winter of 1884-85 that a settlement with Indian and Métis peoples should be sought without delay. The government was not, however, prepared to renegotiate the terms of the treaties nor to allow the creation of the large Indian territory sought by Big Bear and his allies. In an attempt to head off a further series of Indian councils planned for the summer of 1885, Dewdney sought to placate the Cree with increased rations and by finally supplying all of the goods stipulated in the treaties.[56] If these measures failed, then he would order the arrest of key Cree leaders under charges of incitement to insurrection, even though neither he nor the police anticipated violence from the Cree political movement.[57] These plans were in place when armed conflict erupted between the Métis and government forces.

5

The most remarkable aspect of Indian involvement in the North-West Rebellion of 1885 was that it was so limited.[58] A much detested Indian agent and eight other men were killed by a few dissident members of Big Bear's band; two farming instructors in the Battleford District were also murdered in a settling of personal scores.[59] The only major action Indian forces took part in was the Battle of Cut Knife Hill where government forces, fearful of missing out on military action and glory, attacked the group that had gathered around Poundmaker. Only the remarkable restraint shown by Cree leaders saved the government force from being massacred. Elsewhere in the North-West a number of bands left their reserves and killed their cattle for food.

Government officials chose to construe these events as comprising an attempted insurrection by "rebel" Indians, thus providing themselves with the means to prosecute the leaders of the Cree political movement despite ample evidence of the efforts of these leaders to prevent violence. In addition to the eight Indians convicted of murder and hanged at Battleford, Big Bear and Poundmaker were sentenced to prison terms after being tried in a politically expedient fashion.[60] So ended the Cree movement to renegotiate the treaties.

During the summer and fall of 1885 the Department considered a number of proposals for the future management of Indian affairs in the North-West Territories. A memorandum submitted to Dewdney by Assistant Indian Commissioner Reed was illustrative of the repressive stance assumed by the Department;[61] Indian agents, he suggested, should ensure that "rebel" Indians understand that they had forfeited every claim "as a matter of right." A policy of rewarding "loyal" Indians was adopted, and blankets, cattle and ponies that had been confiscated from "rebel" Indians were distributed to those bands that had distinguished themselves during the Rebellion by inaction.[62] To guard against further trouble, the Indian appropriation for the North-West was raised to its 1882 level. Although expenditures in Treaties Four, Six and Seven fell off in the late 1880s, this reflected a sizeable drop in population following the Rebellion. By the end of the decade there was an annual ratio of 41.71 births per thousand Indians as compared to a death rate of 46.38 in the North-West.[63] A sharply declining Indian population made it much easier to maintain economy in Indian administration, at least in the short run. The staggering social and human costs triggered by the decision to sacrifice a co-partnered reserve agricultural programme to a rigid and arbitrarily defined political position would not become apparent until the next century.

The reserve agricultural programme initiated prior to 1885 fell short of achieving government expectations not only because unrealistic short-term goals had been set for it, but also because the purposes of this programme took second place to federal officials' determination to bring Big Bear and other activists under control. Moreover, the compulsion to observe the strictest possible economy that echoed through almost every facet of government operations proved to be a major stumbling block in officials' dealings with Indians. Although the Department of Indian Affairs continued its programme to develop farming on reserves, the initial premise of the reserve agricultural programme — at least as it had been conceived of by Indians — was lost. The farming conducted on prairie reserves after 1885 was no longer the achievement of Indians who were seeking to become self-sufficient members of a new society; instead, it comprised the carefully supervised activities of a people who had become the involuntary wards of government.

In the wake of the Rebellion, Indian agents came to exercise administrative control over almost every aspect of reserve life. Reserves became highly regulated units within a closed system of federal Indian administration. Access to Indians and to information about Indian administration was closely controlled by federal authorities who attributed the slow progress made in reserve agriculture in subsequent years to the nature of Indians as an uncivilized, non-Christian people. In time the Department's self-serving characterization of Indians as being dependent upon government became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Eighteen eighty-five signalled the loss of Indians' ability to affect in any direct or significant fashion the conditions under which they lived. Henceforth their choices were limited to deciding whether to take an active part in reserve agriculture and to place themselves under the unrelenting tutelage of government personnel or whether to adopt a course of circumspect but determined passive resistance. In either case they would remain dependent figures, subject to the ideological presumptions and instrumental power relations of the Canadian Indian administration. By the turn of the century the Minister in charge of Indian Affairs, Clifford Sifton, would champion a policy of transferring unused Indian reserve lands into the hands of speculators and Euro-Canadian settlers.[64]

The policies and actions that served to undermine Indians' initial efforts to respond positively to the disappearance of the buffalo represent an historical indulgence that succeeding generations of Indians have had to endure. A century later Canadians have become willing at least to listen to Indian leaders' proposals for achieving self-reliance and greater autonomy for their communities. To accomplish these ends it will be necessary to come to terms with the unfortunate legacy of a hundred years of tutelage and enforced dependency. A small but essential step towards this objective will be to recognize that the virtual exclusion of Indians from the history of prairie development tells us a great deal more about government that it does about Indians.

NOTES

1 See George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960) for an early and influential statement of this position.

2 Noel Dyck, "The Administration of Federal Indian Aid in the North-West Territories, 1879-1885" (M. A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1970) and Sarah Carter, "Agriculture and Agitation on the Oak River Reserve, 1875-95," *Manitoba History* no. 6 (Fall 1983): 2-9.

3 John L. Tobias, "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline History of Canada's Indian Policy," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1976): 13-30.

4 John L. Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885," *Canadian Historical Review* 64 (1983): 520-21.

5 John L. Taylor, "Two Views on the Meaning of Treaties Six and Seven," in Richard Price, ed., *The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties* (Halifax: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1979).

6 Canada, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1875, Vol. VII, 56.

7 Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* (Toronto: Belford Clarke and Co., 1880), 354.

8 Dyck, "Administration of Federal Indian Aid," 22-25.

9 While small herds of buffalo did occasionally slip into the North-West Territories following 1879, they were quickly taken by impoverished Indian bands; see Frank Gilbert Roe, *The North American Buffalo: A Critical Study of the Species in Its Wild State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), 480-81.

10 Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Dewdney Papers, Vol. IV, Dewdney's Journal for 1879, 17 July (hereafter cited as Dewdney Papers).

11 Dyck, "Administration of Federal Indian Aid," 31-33.

12 See Kenneth McNaught, *The Pelican History of Canada* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 173ff. for a discussion of federal economic policy during this period.

13 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 23 April 1880 and 5 May 1880.

14 Canada, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1881, Vol. 14, Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for 1880: 83, Order to Dewdney, 18 November 1880.

15 Public Archives of Canada, Manuscript Group 26A, John A. Macdonald Papers, Vol. 210: 89450–89462, Dewdney to Macdonald, 19 June 1881 (hereafter cited as PAC, MG 26A, letters).

16 PAC, MG 26A, Vol. 210: 89418, Tilley to Macdonald, 7 May 1881.

17 PAC, RG 10 Indian Affairs Files, File 22367, Estimate for Indian Expenditures in the North–West Territories, 1881–82, n.d. (hereafter cited as PAC, RG 10, file, letter).

18 Ibid.

19 Canada, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1881, No. 14, Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 2.

20 PAC, RG 10, 30249 Black, Macdonald to the Privy Council, 27 June 1881.

21 PAC, RG 10, Private Letterbooks, Vol. 1082, Vankoughnet to Dewdney, 10 November 1882.

22 See Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree," 526–32, for details of how this was accomplished.

23 This may also have reflected the greater fear of the Blackfeet held by government officials.

24 Dyck, "Administration of Federal Indian Aid," Appendix A.

25 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 239.

26 PAC, RG 10, 13642 Black, Nichol to Dewdney, 13 May 1884.

27 Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree," 542, notes that Indian Commissioner Dewdney admitted privately that government had violated the treaties and took steps in February 1885 to rectify this and to increase rations to forestall the convening of further Indian political councils that summer.

28 Frost damaged crops in large sections of the North–West each year between 1880 and 1884.

29 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 27 April 1882, Vol. II: 1186.

30 Isabel Andrews, "Indian Protest Against Starvation: The Yellow Calf Incident of 1884," *Saskatchewan History* 28 (1975): 41–51.

31 PAC, RG 10, Private Letterbooks, Vol. 1085, Vankoughnet Memorandum, 31 January 1884.

32 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 273.

33 Dyck, "Administration of Federal Indian Aid," Appendix A2.

34 Dewdney Papers, Vol. III, Macdonald to Dewdney, 17 September 1883, 445–46.

35 PAC, MG 26A, Vol. 210: 89486, Dewdney to Macdonald, 4 July 1881.

36 PAC, RG 10, 15266 Black, Dewdney to Dennis, 22 July 1879.

37 Canada, House of Commons, *Sessional Papers*, 1881, No. 14, Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for 1880, 84.

38 PAC, RG 10, 29548 Black, Reed to Dewdney, 8 May 1881.

39 PAC, RG 10, 33642 Black, Minutes of the Governor-General's tour of the North-West Territories, n.d. [probably August 1881].

40 PAC, RG 10, 10644 Black, Reed to Dewdney, 28 December 1883.

41 PAC, MG 26A, Vol. 210: 89477–90, Dewdney to Macdonald, 4 July 1881.

42 PAC, RG 10, 10771 Black, Laird to Mills, 12 November 1878.

43 PAC, RG 10, 309A Black, Rae to Dewdney, 11 March 1884.

45 PAC, RG 10, 10181 Black, Herchmer to White, 26 February 1884.

46 See Andrews, "Indian Protest Against Starvation," 45, for an account of this incident.

47 PAC, RG 10, 10648 Black, Reed to Macdonald, 12 April 1884.

48 Ibid.

49 PAC, RG 10, Private Letterbooks, Vol. 1085: 535, Vankoughnet to Reed, 19 March 1884.

50 Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree," 534–35.

51 Ibid., 535–36.

52 PAC, RG 10, 309A Black, Crozier to Irvine, 25 June 1884.

53 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 290–91.

54 PAC, MG 26A, Vol. 210: 42864–71, Dewdney to Macdonald, 5 September 1884.

55 PAC, RG 10, 15040 Black, Wadsworth to Dewdney, 14 August 1884.

56 Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree," 542.

57 Ibid.

58 For further detail see Desmond Morton, *The Last War Drum* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972) and Bob Beal and Rod Macleod, *Prairie Fire: the 1885 North-West Rebellion* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1984).

59 Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree," 543–46.

60 For accounts of these trials see Sandra Estlin Bingaman, "The Trials of Poundmaker and Big Bear," *Saskatchewan History* 28 (1975): 81–94.

61 Dewdney Papers, Vol. 6: 1414–20, Reed to Dewdney, 20 July 1885.

62 Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Memorandum of rewards to Indians especially distinguished for loyalty during the late rebellion, n.d.

63 PAC, RG 10, 63912 Black, Vankoughnet to Reed, 3 January 1890.

64 See D.J.Hall, "Clifford Sifton and the Administration of Indian Affairs, 1896–1905," *Prairie Forum* 2 (1977): 127–51.

Indian Agents and the North-West Rebellion

F. Laurie Barron

1

In 1885 the North-West Territories became the scene of armed insurrection against the Conservative government of John A. Macdonald. More than any other event in Canada's development, the Rebellion has been the subject of considerable historical enquiry. In large measure, this is the result of the fact that, for the first and only time in Canadian history, the insurrectionists included a significant number of Indian people.

In explaining Indian participation in the Rebellion, contemporary critics of the government were quick to condemn Ottawa's handling of the so-called Indian problem. This was underscored in political post-mortems both in the eastern and Territorial presses, but the most damning criticism of the government was raised in the House of Commons. There, in April 1886, the Liberal member for Huron West — W.C. Cameron — unleashed a blistering attack on the entire administration of Indian Affairs in western Canada. He vehemently denounced the government's broken promises, its violation of treaty rights, its willful mistreatment of the Indian, and its misuse of moneys granted by Parliament.[1]

Central to Cameron's argument was his insistence that there was a direct link between the Indian uprising and the kind of personnel employed by the government, especially the Indian agents. These officials, he maintained, were little more than Tory carpet-baggers who, having proven themselves unfit for public office in the East, had been given positions in Indian administration in Manitoba and the Territories.[2] And it was these same officials, whom he described as corrupt, incompetent and immoral, who had provoked the Rebellion — not only by terrorizing and brutalizing Indian men, but also by debauching Indian women.[3] As proof, Cameron assured the House that he knew of an Indian agent who lived on a western reserve "beneath the shadow of the Methodist mission, in open adultery with two young squaws."[4] He also cited the case of an Englishman who, although unfit for public service in his own country, had been appointed to Indian Services in the Territories where he had been "revelling in the sensual enjoyments of a western harem, plentifully supplied with select cullings from the western prairie flowers."[5]

For the most part, historians have echoed Cameron's indictment of the government, especially in regard to its reserve policy. Generally, it is described as a policy which sought to wrench the Indian from his traditional culture, and in the process, remake him in the image of a white Christian farmer. Earlier writers, such as G.F.G. Stanley, have qualified their criticism somewhat by speculating that, given the disappearance of the buffalo on which traditional Plains culture had been predicated, the reserve system was probably the only alternative to the physical destruction of the Indian.[6] By comparison, more recent writers — including Native historians — have portrayed the policy as misguided and even racist, both in design and effect.[7] Both schools agree, however, that the policy entailed an agonizing and painful adjustment in Indian society; and that that adjustment was severely crippled by the government's penny-pinching approach to Indian administration, one which placed economy before human welfare and virtually drove the Indian to rebellion.[8]

Less evident in historical accounts are the concerns which Cameron expressed about the nature of government appointments. On the whole, Indian agents, either as individuals or as a group, have not figured in the discussion of the Rebellion, apart from a few, often unsubstantiated generalizations. Harold Fryer, for example, in his book *Frog Lake Massacre* (1975), limits his comments on Indian agents as a cause of discontent to a three-sentence statement, without any documentation whatsoever. He writes,

> The Indians, too, had legitimate grievances. Unscrupulous Indian agents had in many cases deprived them of their rights promised in the Treaties signed a decade before. Some agents were deliberately stealing and selling food allocated to the Indians and with the buffalo now swept from the prairies, many tribes were on the verge of starvation.[9]

This statement is characteristic not only because it relegates the agent to the position of a stereotyped government official, invariably depicted in negative terms, but also because it makes no serious attempt to understand the role and importance of the Indian agent in the events leading up to 1885.

And yet, if Cameron was correct — if in fact agents were mere political hacks, appointed for no other reason than their political connections; or if they were corrupt, or immoral, or incompetent — then that knowledge would lend a context to the Rebellion which is important in understanding the Indian reaction. The fact is that government policy was not implemented in a human vacuum, but rather by Indian agents, and if those officials were as corrupt and abusive as Cameron would lead us to believe, that insight conveys an understanding of the Rebellion that has not always been appreciated, especially in its own right.

2

That political patronage figured into the appointment of Indian agents seems certain. In an age when there was no pretense to an impartial civil service, the ability to govern was very much dependent upon the appointment of individuals loyal to the party in power. Also, the spoils of office allowed the government of the day to consolidate its power by attracting a range of vested interests through the distribution of offices and contracts. This often meant that civil service appointments were contingent upon the endorsement of influential individuals well connected in the party; and in some cases, such as in Indian Affairs, successive generations of certain families were closely associated with service to particular government departments.[10] Not untypical of the patronage system was the would-be appointment of Molyneux St. John. In October 1878, the incoming government of John A. Macdonald offered St. John a position in the Edmonton Indian agency at an annual salary of twelve hundred dollars. The offer was actually an insult because, only four months earlier, St. John had been made an Indian Superintendent by the outgoing government of Alexander Mackenzie. In reality, the new offer meant a demotion and a cut in pay by some four hundred dollars; and as expected, when St. John resigned from the Department in protest, he was replaced by a reliable Conservative.[11]

It should not be assumed, however, that preferment to office was based solely on party loyalty and connections. In the case of appointments to the Indian Department, the formal education of prospective agents was thought to be less important than practical experience and sound judgement; and there are indications that, when individuals lacked such qualities, their political connections did not always count. In 1883 Sam MacDonald, the brother of an Indian agent in Treaty Four, was refused an office after it was discovered that he had a certain fondness for alcohol.[12] Similarly, in 1877 an Indian agent by the name of McKay, stationed at Berens River in Manitoba, was refused a transfer to the North-West Territories. In support of his transfer, McKay had secured the endorsement of both Father Albert Lacombe and Archbishop Taché. Not only was the latter well connected in the Conservative Party, but also both men often worked closely with Departmental officials and their recommendations were not without influence. And yet in this case, McKay's transfer was vetoed, despite such endorsement. The reason seemingly was that McKay was a Métis who, earlier in his career, had caused trouble both at Qu'Appelle and Fort Carlton. The exact nature of that trouble is not known. What is certain is that he was deemed to be dangerous among Indians because he was easily led astray, and for that reason, Departmental officials decided to leave him at Berens where "he [could], do no harm."[13] What both these cases illustrate is that, as important as influence may have been, political connections alone did not guarantee preferment.

At the same time, it is evident that the Department found it difficult to recruit qualified personnel for posts in the North-West. At a later date, the office of Indian agent came to be seen as a "political plum": it represented the senior position in Indian Affairs at the local level and it would command an attractive salary.[14] But during the early formative period — prior to the Rebellion — the office lacked certain advantages and often was difficult to fill with the kind of person desired. Given the lack of western settlement, agents normally had only limited experience in the West or were recruited directly from eastern Canada. The problem was that the salaries and living allowances were based on the fee schedules of the East and in no way compensated for the higher living costs in the Territories, where many everyday items had to be imported.[15] The position itself tended to be ill-defined and yet extremely onerous, given the fact that the agent was held responsible for virtually everything that happened on the reserves under his charge. Also of considerable concern were the isolation and loneliness of prairie life, not to mention the difficulties and expense of returning to the East to visit family and friends. And to top it off, the office was seen as being potentially dangerous because of the turbulent state of white-Indian relations in the West.[16] What all of this meant was that the Department was unable to attract well-qualified, career-minded civil servants, especially married men whose family life made them more suitable than bachelors. On the contrary, not infrequently the men appointed were only second- and even third-rate administrators, with little ambition and talent, and drawn to the office mainly because of the salary, such at it was.[17] There were, of course, some exceptions — Hayter Reed, the Indian agent at Battleford in the early eighties, being a case in point; nevertheless, quality appointments in the days leading up to the Rebellion all too often were few and far between.

What made this situation especially tragic was that, even when the incompetence of agents became known, the Department found it difficult to dismiss them, owing to the lack of qualified replacements. This was true of John Rae, the son of the famous arctic explorer.[18] Rae began his career in the Indian Department as a sub-agent and transferred to Battleford. There, however, it became evident that Rae had developed a severe alcohol problem which left him incapacitated much of the time. Despite that fact, he was not immediately fired because the Department was in desperate need of experienced personnel. As a form of reprimand, he was transferred back to Prince Albert in 1885, but when his drinking persisted, he was finally demoted to clerk and sent to Regina.[19] Even then, he was later reappointed as acting agent in the Duck Lake District and it was not until 1887 that, once and for all, he was dismissed from office.[20]

Equally indicative was the appointment of Charles Adams as Rae's replacement at Prince Albert in 1886. A one-time factor in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, Adams was deemed to be a touchy and sensitive, although generally clever, individual.[21] Within six months of his appointment as agent, however, he was informed by the Indian Commissioner that the Department did not consider him capable enough to run the affairs of an agency as important as Prince Albert.[22] Although he was relieved of his position, he was kept on the payroll in the hope that he might still prove useful. The reason was that the Department was short of personnel and there was no guarantee that Adams's replacement would be any more competent.[23]

While the problem of competence was real enough, less certain is the extent to which the personal characteristics of agents may be condemned. It is not possible, of course, to make any definitive statement about the prejudiced or immoral behaviour of Indian agents simply because, by definition, such behaviour is not always detectable. What can be said is that wrong-doing was evident, although certainly not on a scale that would warrant Cameron's observations before the House of Commons.

Although racial problems *per se* seem not to have been overt, it is quite clear that racial stereotyping did figure into the administration of the reserves. Not untypical is the explanation offered by Indian Commissioner Dewdney for the dismissal of Charles Adams, a Métis. According to Dewdney, "... it has been the experience of this office that Half-breeds are constitutionally unfit for a position requiring the exercise of so much firmness and tact, combined with the assumption of responsibility, as that of an Indian Agent."[24] Also indicative of bias is the fact that, although agriculture in Treaty Six was plagued by a whole range of problems over which the Indian had no control, agents commonly attributed the failure of reserve farming to the racial characteristics of the Indian, despite the fact that failures among the white farmers in the same area were common. Hayter Reed, although one of the most capable agents in Treaty Six, expressed a widely held view when he explained that Indians were ill equipped for farming not only because of an "inherent, restless disposition," but also because they were improvident and uncompetitive.[25]

Reason dictates that such an attitude was probably carried over into the day-to-day operation of the reserve and may very well have poisoned relations with the Indian. Certainly it is clear that some agents enforced government policy with a rigour and enthusiasm which completely outran common sense. John Rae, the agent first at Prince Albert and then at Battleford, had little hesitation in rigorously implementing the policy of "no work, no rations." It was a scheme which smacked of the principle of "less eligibility," predicated on the understanding that the test of need was whether the would-be recipient of rations would submit to distasteful conditions. Rae, seemingly using the techniques of a drill-sergeant,[26] willingly extracted as much work as possible while, at the same time, minimizing the amount of rations issued. And on two occasions, he took considerable delight in reporting that, owing to a three-fold increase in Indian labour, he had reduced the provisions issued to destitute Indians by some 54 percent over a two-year period.[27] It seems likely that these figures were exaggerated and that Rae's main intent was to curry favour from senior officials in the Department; however, it may also be that his enthusiasm was an expression of racial bias.

That Indian agents were also corrupt is not certain, although once more there were indications that problems existed. In 1884, the Reverend Father Constantine Scollen — who had lived among the Indians — was quoted by the *Winnipeg Free Press* to the effect that there was a retinue of "money-making, dishonest agents."[28] This may have reflected the belief that some agents were guilty of secretly selling Indian provisions for personal gain. It was also believed that, because agents contracted for food supplied hardware and other commodities needed on the reserve, they received payoffs from dishonest contractors who provided only inferior goods. Writ large in Departmental correspondence are complaints that reserve Indians were provided with faulty implements, wild and unusable cattle and oxen, and rancid food laced with maggots.[29] In 1883, following his return to Ottawa after a tour of the Territories, the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs expressed to John A. Macdonald his personal doubts about the honesty of some Indian agents. He was specifically concerned about a supplier by the name of I.G. Baker and Co. which he believed had "manipulated" some of the agents.[30] Macdonald immediately contacted the resident Indian Commissioner and instructed him to dismiss "without mercy" any agent who had been careless or willfully connived in receiving substandard articles.[31] At the time, the Commissioner doubted that there was cause for concern, but in actual fact, Ottawa's misgivings were not without some justification.

This was reflected in the scandal involving a Treaty Seven agent by the name of C.E. Denny.[32] Earlier, in 1882, Denny had been guilty of petty fraud: he had used Departmental farm labourers on his own ranch for personal gain; he had advised the Department to purchase a harness and wagon at a price that was three times the actual value; and he had had the Department purchase a horse in which he secretly had a half interest. Despite these infractions, Denny was not fired, probably because of his exemplary record to that point, and because of the need for qualified personnel. Within a matter of months, however, his career in Indian Affairs was ended abruptly when he committed a far more serious crime. Seemingly what happened was that Denny, with the connivance of Baker and Co., had purchased tainted flour and distributed it to several reserves. This flour, by Departmental regulation, was supposed to have been no. 1 grade. In actual fact, it was grossly substandard. There was suspicion that it had been milled from frozen wheat or laced with weeds and cleanings, causing a strong smell and taste. Tragically, the result was the death of some thirty to forty tribesmen. For his part, Denny was forced to resign from the Department, although he was not prosecuted.

The only other major scandal during this period occurred at Battleford. In late 1885, the Deputy Superintendent in Ottawa insisted that the acting Indian agent at Battleford be replaced by a man named J.P. Wright. Wright had had experience as a senior clerk to the Farm Inspector in Winnipeg and his appointment was supported in Ottawa, despite protests from the police who claimed that the incumbent was "doing splendidly."[33] Ironically, and much to the embarrassment of the government, Wright was on the job only two months when it was discovered that, during his time as clerk in Winnipeg, he had embezzled almost three thousand dollars.[34] Unlike Denny, Wright was both fired and prosecuted, but as a post-script, it might be noted that some years later he was reappointed to the Department, first as a clerk in the Winnipeg office and later as an Indian agent in Treaty Four.

The result of these scandals, undoubtedly, was to confirm the popular impression that corruption was rife. And yet, there is reason to believe that corruption was not necessarily true of the areas where rebellion erupted. In the first place, it must be noted that the Denny incident took place in the south, in Treaty Seven, and that the Wright scandal occurred only after the Rebellion had ended. That aside, the agencies in Treaty Six which stood in direct relation to the Rebellion were remarkably free from charges of wrong-doing. What was a common complaint by senior officials was that agents lacked certain administrative talents, especially in keeping ledgers and writing reports; and while there were "irregularities" — confirmed by a laundry list of criticisms — these were usually the result of carelessness, inefficiency or neglect, not of corruption. Secondly, the agent did not have the discretion and freedom that one might assume. Not only were his activities periodically scrutinized by the Inspector of Agencies, but also he was required to keep on-going accounts of his day-to-day operations, as well as submit reports on a monthly basis, however inadequately they may have been written. Moreover, in 1883, much of the agent's discretionary power, especially in financial matters, was drastically curtailed through an administrative reorganization which centralized control in Ottawa.[35] Lastly, although there were unscrupulous companies peddling inferior goods, that in itself does not make agents culpable. The fact is that, during the pre-Rebellion period, reputable companies with quality merchandise and a record of service were often hard to find. As in the American West, the normal marketing strategy of companies working the frontier areas was to make up for transportation and damage costs by substituting inferior goods. Essentially, this meant that agents often had little choice as to the quality of the merchandise, and not infrequently, they were forced to work through "fly-by-night" partnerships, often operating out of Montana. And of course, given the questionable administrative talents of some agents, it may very well have been that agents were the victims, rather than the perpetrators, of fraud.

The charge of sexual immorality leveled against agents may be viewed in a similar light. On the one hand, there is no reason to believe Cameron's outlandish references to a western harem, or anything like it. Generally, his comments were self-serving and fall into the category of pure sensationalism, calculated to embarrass the government at all costs. It must also be remembered that, unlike farming instructors, who after 1882 lived and worked on the reserves,[36] Indian agents prior to the Rebellion usually resided in central locations, such as Prince Albert or Battleford, where they were scrutinized by the white community. On the other hand, however, the duties of the agent required that he visit the reserves as often as possible and this sometimes entailed extended stays there. In most cases, the agent was not only an unattached bachelor, but also in a position which lent itself to sexual exploitation. During the harsh winter months, reserve society was often destitute and starving; and as one source suggests, "gifts of food in return for favours rendered would have been irresistible and truly in keeping with the frontier morality of the time...."[37] That some Indian agents were among those who actually took advantage of the situation may be inferred by concerns expressed in Ottawa. In October 1884, the Deputy Superintendent penned a letter to the Indian Commission in which he admitted that the immorality of Departmental personnel had been a problem in the past, "owing to the material from which we had to select our Employes [*sic*]."[38] The comment applied to both farming instructors and Indian agents and was meant as a basis for instructing the Commissioner that henceforth employment in the Department would be contingent upon integrity, sobriety and chastity. What is not certain is the extent of the problem. Certainly the existence of widespread immorality is not borne out by Departmental correspondence nor by press coverage, although it may be that indiscretions were dealt with discreetly. Conversely, the lack of hard evidence may mean that, as in the case of corruption, isolated instances of immorality led to unwarranted generalizations and rumours which distorted the realities of the situation.

3

As important as personal considerations were, it was perhaps as a collectivity that agents had their greatest impact on Indian society. Contrary to popular perception, reserve society was confounded not only by a surfeit of government control and domination, but by a lack of Departmental leadership and personnel. Not only were there too few agents to do the work, but because of the sizeable turnover in appointments, Indian agents as a group represented a considerable de-stabilizing influence, at the very moment when continuity was needed most.

This was especially so in the very area which spawned the insurrection.

In May 1877, M.G. Dickieson was appointed the first and only Indian agent for the entire Treaty Six area. As the private secretary of the Minister of the Interior, he had been present at the negotiations of Treaties Four and Six, and he was known to be both a capable administrator and intimately familiar with the Indian situation. He was, therefore, an excellent choice as agent. The problem was that he was assigned a task that no single individual could have fulfilled, even in two lifetimes. Treaty Six — larger than any other treaty area in the North-West Superintendency — was a vast territory straddling the Saskatchewan River and ranging from Cumberland House in the east to the Rocky Mountains in the west. Among his many duties, Dickieson was required to superintend spring planting on the various reserves. This meant the purchase and distribution of hundreds of bushels of grain, as well as the hiring of agricultural instructors and labourers. All of this, of course, was to be accomplished in a Treaty area measuring more than six hundred miles across, at a time when roads were non-existent and trails often impassable. Indicative was the fact that, on one occasion, Dickieson sent instructions by special messenger on horseback from his headquarters at Battleford to an employee in Prince Albert. After ten days, he still had not received a reply.[39] If all of this was not bad enough, Dickieson was also required to serve as clerk for the entire North-West Superintendency, comprising the areas that fell under Treaties Five, Six and Seven. And to add injury to insult, in 1879 when David Laird resigned as Indian Superintendent, Dickieson was asked to take over the job of acting Superintendent, in addition to his other duties, and without extra pay.[40] Not surprisingly, five months later Dickieson resigned.

Even before Dickieson's departure, Ottawa had sanctioned in principle the appointment of two additional agents for Treaty Six. The intent was to have an agency in Edmonton in the west, one in Battleford in the centre, and another in the Duck Lake/Prince Albert area in the east. As it turned out, however, the task of providing adequate and stable leadership proved to be a problem in all three agencies and would remain so until after the Rebellion.

In the Duck Lake/Prince Albert district, the Department appointed a succession of five agents in almost as many years.[41] In February 1879, Edwin Allen was chosen to head up the agency. He had experience as a constable with the North West Mounted Police and he also had spent a few months as Indian agent in the Cypress Hills. Within two months of his appointment to Prince Albert, however, he had resigned over a dispute with Ottawa.[42] Allen's replacement was William Clarke. Clarke's credentials included a brief stint as Indian agent at Norway House in the Manitoba Superintendency, and for the most part, his appointment proved satisfactory, although he was criticized by the Department for administrative sloppiness. He remained in office for little more than a year and then resigned in favour of a business career in Winnipeg. The next man to be appointed was John Rae who, it will be recalled, was subsequently transferred to Battleford. Succeeding Rae as sub-agent was J.A. Macrae who took up his duties in 1883. Macrae had gained his experience as an agency clerk in Edmonton and his talents in that capacity continued to be recognized.[43] As an agent, however, he seems to have suffered from an inflated ego. The result, according to the Deputy Superintendent, was that he "made himself obnoxious to all parties."[44] In 1885 he was informed that his performance was unsatisfactory and that he would be demoted and transferred to the head office in Regina. The last man to be appointed before the Rebellion was J.B. Lash. Lash, an ex-police constable and one-time agency clerk, was in office only two months when the insurrection broke and he was made a prisoner of Louis Riel.

A similar situation was true of the Battleford agency.[45] There, three agents were appointed in the space of five years. In the summer of 1879, Walter Orde, a clerk in the Department of Finance in Ottawa, took over as agent. At the time, the Deputy Superintendent admitted that there was little in Orde's background that recommended him as an agent, and as time would tell, his appointment proved to be a mistake. Among other things, there were complaints from senior officials that he was a careless administrator and correspondent, and of special concern were his questionable financial transactions and "unaccounted balances."[46] Owing to these problems, he was removed from office in 1880 and transferred to Shoal Lake where, ironically, he was employed as an accountant. The next agent was Hayter Reed. Unlike many of the other agents, Reed was a capable, well-educated and talented administrator. The problem, as far as the Battleford agency was concerned, was that he was destined for a meteoric rise in the Department. After only two years at Battleford, he was promoted to Assistant Indian Commissioner and from there went on to become the Commissioner and eventually Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Reed's replacement at Battleford was John Rae who, in 1883, was transferred from the Prince Albert area. Prior to his removal from office because of drinking, Rae remained as Indian agent until after the Rebellion.

As a group, the men appointed to these two agencies had only limited experience. With the exception of Orde, all had some familiarity with the Indian scene, either as clerks or constables, or as agents with brief terms of office. But for the most part, whatever knowledge and expertise they were able to acquire came from on-the-job training; and considering that, on average, agents remained in office for only a little more than a single year, it is highly unlikely that they provided either leadership or insight into the problems tormenting Indian society. What was particularly tragic, of course, was that during the early formative period it was these same men who were the major source of information on which government policy was based.

4

In evaluating the role of the Indian agent as a cause of the Rebellion, it is seldom possible to make a clear distinction between the agent as a person and the policy he was required to implement simply because Indians themselves did not always make such distinction. There were, needless to say, indications that agents were disliked for personal reasons. Agent Dickieson, for instance, was described as "hard like iron" by Chief Pasqua from the Qu'Appelle district; and to show his dissatisfaction, the Chief travelled some 150 miles to personally protest to the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba.[47] Nevertheless, verbal protest was often muted both by the lack of results and by the limited literacy of Indian society. Consequently, the form of protest that became increasingly characteristic was direct confrontation within which there was little opportunity or reason to articulate a distinction between the agent and government policy. Both were seen as two sides of the same coin, and within that context, the outbreak of Rebellion meant that the agent logically became a main target.

Indicative were the events at Battleford in late March 1885. On 28 March, just after the Métis victory at Duck Lake, word was received in Battleford that the Indians were on their way to make demands on Agent John Rae. Virtually the entire town on the south side of the Battle River was now abandoned, with most of the residents taking shelter in the police barracks to the North. On 30 March, some two hundred warriors belonging to the bands of Poundmaker and Little Pine, "all armed and painted,"[48] arrived in Battleford and immediately proceeded to the Indian agency. By this time, Agent Rae had been warned by a Métis woman that the Indians intended to shoot him on sight, and so, understandably, he refused to leave the barracks.[49] Poundmaker, however, did meet with William McKay, an official of the Hudson's Bay Company, and among other things, he used the occasion to complain about the Indian agent. His specific grievance was that Rae had not been there to meet them, adding "That was always the way — these government agents were never where they should be when wanted."[50] That same night, the town of Battleford was pillaged.[51] Although the destruction was widespread, those in authority were often singled out, and special attention was paid to the property of the Indian agent. According to an account by the *Winnipeg Daily Sun*, "The Office and residence of Mr. Rae ... was [*sic*] wrecked in the most fiendish manner, not an article of value being left whole. Papers strewed the floor, which had been hacked with axes."[52]

Even more telling was the murder of sub-Agent Thomas Quinn in early April. The setting for the so-called Frog Lake Massacre was the rampant starvation and hardship which plagued the Plains Cree and others during the harsh winter of 1884-85. It was a situation made intolerable by a government policy which insisted that able-bodied Indians must work in order to receive rations, despite the fact that there was seldom enough work to be done, and that often the Indians lacked the clothing and footwear to withstand the sub-zero temperatures.[53] Historians generally argue that Quinn became the first victim of the uprising because, as agent, he was the official who enforced the policy and presided over Indian suffering. There is little criticism of Quinn as a person and at least one writer has argued that Quinn "was said to be the best liked and most efficient employee of the Canadian Government in the whole North-West Territories."[54]

In actual fact, Quinn's personal qualities left a great deal to be desired and it may well be that his murder was precipitated as much by his personal characteristics as by the policy he was required to institute.[55] In the first place, he seems to have won little respect in the Indian community, despite the fact he had connections there. By birth he was an American Métis of Irish, French and Sioux ancestry.[56] He not only spoke his mother's tongue, mirrored in Cree references to him as "Sioux Speaker,"[57] but also was married to a Cree woman with relatives at Frog Lake.[58] Nevertheless, he seems to have been contemptuous of Indian society and very much enjoyed flaunting his authority; and among the Cree, this earned him the unflattering labels, "dog agent,"[59] and "Dragon Fly."[60] Moreover, Quinn was known to have an explosive temper. On one occasion, in 1883, he took exception to the rude language used by the farming instructor, a man named Clink. Seemingly the agent became so enraged that he slapped Clink's face and literally threw him out of the agency office — for which Quinn was found guilty of assault and fined.[61] In the Indian community, he was known as a bully, and in the past, there had been a number of acrimonious and heated confrontations between Quinn and some of Big Bear's followers.[62] Thirdly, Quinn was suspected by some of being corrupt. According to Louis Goulet, a Métis who spent some time at Frog Lake, Quinn and Instructor Delaney were manipulating the food rations in order to force Big Bear's band to clear the lands around their encampment. The intent, seemingly, was that after the band had been moved onto its reserve the two men would buy up the cleared land and sell it at a profit to incoming settlers. It seems likely that this accusation was little more than a matter of idle speculation, unsupported by fact. Nevertheless, to the extent that it became a rumour in the Indian community, it undoubtedly would have exacerbated the tensions between the agent and his Indian wards.[63] Finally, Quinn seems to have been compulsively stubborn, especially in regard to enforcing the rations policy. He was very much opposed to settlers giving handouts to destitute Indians, and when he caught the local farming instructor, John Delaney, giving out rations without requiring work, he reported him to the Indian Commissioner for reprimand.[64] His intransigence was also illustrated in a dispute with Big Bear in September 1884. For three days running, Quinn steadfastly refused to give in to the Chief's demand that, as a condition of the band accepting the annual treaty payment, the agent slaughter some beef for a feast. The argument ended only after the Hudson's Bay Company factor, who thought Quinn was being unreasonable, offered to kill one of the Company's cattle.[65] Given the agent's attitude, it was no accident that the man who murdered Quinn, Wandering Spirit, had on several occasions been refused supplies by the agent, and in the past had promised to kill Quinn.[66] Nor was it out of character that, after the massacre, an elderly Cree rode around the camp chanting, "Sioux Speaker, will you again shake your head when I plead, a piece of bacon?"[67] The fact is that Quinn was intensely disliked for personal reasons. It was precisely because of this that, of those massacred, only the agent's dead body was singled out for indecent assault.[68]

And so, in conclusion, it may be argued that Cameron's indictment of Departmental personnel was not without justification. Certainly not all of his allegations are supported by existing evidence; nevertheless, incompetence, instability and often insensitivity did characterize the local administration of Indian affairs in the years leading up to the Rebellion. During a period when tribesmen were experiencing the shattering impact of economic and cultural dislocation, the transition to reserve life was overseen by agents who, all too frequently, lacked the insights and experience needed to cushion human plight. What was needed was agency personnel who could respond to Indian crises with an efficiency tempered with understanding and compassion. That this was not always the case, in part, explains why there was an Indian uprising.

NOTES

1 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, Speech of M.C. Cameron, Session 1886, Vol. I, 718–30.

2 Ibid., 719.

3 Ibid., 720.

4 Ibid., 720.

5 Ibid., 720.

6 G.F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 242.

7 See Howard Adams, "Subjugation of the Indian and Métis," in *Prison of Grass* (Toronto: New Press, 1975), 64–75.

8 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 269; and Adams, *Prison of Grass*, 83–84.

9 Harold Fryer, *Frog Lake Massacre* (Aldergrove, B.C.: Frontier Publishing Ltd., 1975), 3.

10 J.D. Leighton, "The Development of Federal Indian Policy in Canada, 1849–1890" (Ph.D. diss., University of Western Ontario, 1975), 365.

11 At first, St. John was replaced by James Stewart who was forced to resign because of "irregularities" and over-expenditures, despite warning from senior officials. In turn, Stewart was replaced by William Anderson, who had had some experience with Indians in British Columbia, and perhaps more important, who had been known personally by the Indian Commissioner for some years. According to Dewdney, Anderson was "a man of good judgement and most reliable." Indian Commissioner to James Stewart, 31 August 1880; and Indian Commissioner to the Superintendent General, 1 September, 1880; Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC) RG 10, Vol. 3695, File 14875.

12 Ibid., 365.

13 Ibid., 354.

14 See the editorial comment about the appointment of George Day as Indian agent, *Saskatchewan Herald* (Battleford), 27 May 1901.

15 Leighton, "Development of Federal Indian Policy," 369.

16 Ibid., 369.

17 Ibid., 360.

18 "History of the Saskatchewan Uprising," *Winnipeg Daily Sun*, 1885. Manuscript housed in Special Collections, Shortt Library,

University of Saskatchewan. (Hereafter referred to as *Winnipeg Daily Sun)*.

19 Leighton, "Development of Federal Indian Policy," 361.

20 Anthony J. Looy, "The Indian Agent and his Role in the administration of the Northwest Superintendency, 1876-1894" (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1977), 72. It might be noted that Rae was a cousin of John A. Macdonald. Of what importance this was in prolonging his employment in the Department is difficult to say. For a reference to the family connection, consult Bob Beal and Rod Macleod, *Prairie Fire: The 1885 North-West Rebellion* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1984), 181.

21 Ibid., 84.

22 Adams was relieved of his office because of the irregular manner in which he ran the agency. The Commissioner was of the opinion that he "... erred from ignorance and want of judgement rather than from any evil intentions." Commissioner Dewdney to the Superintendent General, 21 December 1886, PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3773, File 35764.

23 Leighton, "Development of Federal Indian Policy," 363.

24 Commissioner Dewdney to the Superintendent General, 21 December 1886, PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3773, File 35764.

25 Hayter Reed to Superintendent General, 7 November 1881, Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1882, No. 6, p. 76. It might be noted that in the same report Reed expressed his conviction that "... ere long the Indians will become free from the dependence upon public aid..." and acknowledged that there were structural reasons for the failure of farming, such as the lack of a sufficient number of working cattle.

26 Looy, "Indian Agent and his Role," 70.

27 Ibid., 70.

28 *Manitoba Free Press*, 1 January 1884.

29 See Norma Sluman and Jean Goodwill, *John Tootoosis* (Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 1982), 26-27; Leighton, "Development of Federal Indian Policy," 835; and the *Saskatchewan Herald* (Battleford), 22 September 1888.

30 John A. Macdonald to Edgar Dewdney, 19 November 1883, Edgar Dewdney Papers, 1861-1926, Vol. 4, Glenbow-Alberta Institute.

31 Ibid.

32 Details of the Denny scandal are contained in departmental correspondence, PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3609, Files 3394 and 3380. For a secondary account, consult Noel E. Dyck, "The Administration of Federal Indian Aid in the North-West Territories 1879-1885" (M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1970), 54-55.

33 Leighton, "Development of Federal Indian Policy," 362.

34 Ibid., 362.

35 The Deputy Superintendent General, following a tour of the West in 1883, came to the conclusion that Departmental expenditures in the West were far too high largely because, in the past, spending had been based on estimates submitted by local agents. For a discussion of Vankoughnet's retrenchment policy, see Leighton, "Development of Indian Policy," 392; and Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 269–70.

36 Departmental correspondence contains a number of references to the sexual immorality of farming instructors. In 1882, for example, Chief Crowfoot and his wife complained that the instructor on their reserve, a Mr. Norrish, was sleeping with the daughter of Calf Woman. Upon investigation, it was discovered that the mother regularly received extra rations from the instructor, presumably in return for the sexual favours of the daughter. Eventually, the instructor admitted to having had intercourse with the girl and was summarily dismissed from office. Inspector Wadsworth to Commissioner Dewdney, 24 July 1882, PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3609, File 3334.

37 Sluman and Goodwill, *John Tootoosis*, 55.

38 Vankoughnet to Dewdney, 28 October 1884, Edgar Dewdney papers, 1861–1926, Vol. V, Glenbow-Alberta Institute.

39 Looy, "Indian Agent and his Role," 38.

40 Ibid., 40.

41 A secondary account of the appointments to the Duck Lake–Prince Albert district can be found in Looy, "Indian Agent and his Role," 64–74.

42 Allen was subsequently appointed Indian Agent at Fort Walsh. In 1881, he was suspended and later dismissed because he had "... continuously certified to an average weight of beef received from Messrs. Baker & Co., nearly one hundred percent in excess of the actual weight delivered..." Privy Council Report, 4 September 1881, PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3757, File 31333.

43 Generally, Macrae's administrative skills were not the subject of criticism, but departmental correspondence does contain reference to the "unsatisfactory condition" in which he had left the Edmonton office when he took up his duties as agent. See Macrae to the Superintendent General, 1884, PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3677, File 11468.

44 Cited in Looy, "Indian Agent and his Role," 73.

45 Information on the Battleford personnel is taken from Ibid., 74–77.

46 Cited in Ibid., 76. Orde became the agent at Battleford as a result of a mutually agreed upon exchange of positions between himself and M.G. Dickieson. See PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3772, File 34871.

47 Looy, "Indian Agent and his Role," 54.

48 William McKay, cited in W.B. Cameron, "When Poundmaker Marched on Battleford," 6; William Bleasdell Cameron Manuscripts, Morton Manuscript Collection, Shortt Library, University of Saskatchewan.

49 The woman, Mrs. Louis Flammand, said the Indians also intended to kill the Reverend Thomas Clarke, the principal of the Battleford Industrial School and William McKay, in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company post in Battleford. Of the three men, Rae appeared to be almost alarmed about the information. See Cameron, "When Poundmaker Marched," 4-5.

50 Ibid., 10.

51 According to Robert Jefferson, a farming instructor on Little Pine reserve, only a few Indians actually took part in the destruction; and of these, most were women and men of little consequence. He argues that most Indians only hurriedly grabbed whatever was in sight and then returned home, and that the main looting was done by white men the next morning. Most contemporary accounts, however, insist that the pillaging was the work of Indians. See Robert Jefferson, *Fifty Years on the Saskatchewan* (Battleford: Canadian North-West Historical Society, 1929), 127-28.

52 *Winnipeg Daily Sun*, 49.

53 Dyck, "Administration," 43.

54 Fryer, *Frog Lake Massacre*, 5.

55 Quinn's first appointment in Indian Affairs was as agency clerk in the Battleford office. In 1883, he was sent to Frog Lake to oversee the settlement of the Plains Indians in that area. At the time, he was given the status of a sub-agent, and as the Indian Commissioner subsequently explained to John A. Macdonald, although Quinn was well versed in the Indian character and language, he was not suitable to fill the office of agent because of his carelessness. Commissioner Dewdney to the Superintendent General, 27 December 1883, PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3664.

56 Sluman and Goodwill, *John Tootoosis*, 49.

57 See Joseph Dion, *My Tribe the Crees* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1979), 96.

58 His brothers-in-law were Lone Man and Walking Horse. Sluman and Goodwill, *John Tootoosis*, 53.

59 Ibid., 49.

60 Dion, *My Tribe*, 90.

61 Looy, "Indian Agent and his Role," 211-12.

62 Sluman and Goodwill, *John Tootoosis*, 46.

63 Guillaume Charette, *Vanishing Spaces, Memoirs of Louis Goulet* (Winnipeg: Editions Bois Brûlés, 1980), 158-59.

64 Sluman and Goodwill, *John Tootoosis*, 46.

65 Beal and Macleod, *Prairie Fire*, 117.

66 *Winnipeg Daily Sun*, 61. There seems little doubt that Quinn's murder was premeditated. According to Mary Gowanlock, soon after the Indians took control of Frog Lake, they became "more or less frenzied" by drinking intoxicants. As part of their plunder, they obtained wine and spirits from the home of the local priest, as well as two cases of Davis's Pain Killer, 90 percent of which was alcohol. Undoubtedly, the intoxicants were instrumental in releasing suppressed aggression and may well have contributed to the general massacre which ensued. The use of alcohol, however, should not obscure the fact that there was a prior intent to commit murder. During the night preceding the takeover of Frog Lake, the warrior society had held a war dance during which Wandering Spirit declared his intent "to eat two-legged meat," in other words to kill someone. After some prodding by the war chief, others eventually chanted their intentions to join in. For a discussion of these events, consult Hugh A. Dempsey, *Big Bear: The End of Freedom* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984), 153-55.

67 Cited in Dion, *My Tribe*, 95.

68 Charette, *Vanishing Spaces*, 127-28.

The Indian View of the 1885 Uprising

A. Blair Stonechild

The Indian Version of the Rebellion: an Untold Story

Although there is no shortage of written material on the North-West Rebellion of 1885, Indian Elders have said that the full story of the Indian involvement has yet to be told.

As one Elder put it, "This story was told only at night and at bedtime. And not the whole story. No way. They did not want to tell on anyone who were [*sic*] involved. It is like when something is covered with a blanket and held down on the ground on all four sides. They talked about it in parts only. And they got nervous telling it. They were afraid of another uprising and more trouble. And they were also afraid of getting the young people into trouble."[1]

Some Elders did not like to tell the stories simply because it made them sad. Other Elders did not tell their stories to any white person, even priests, as they were afraid that these stories would be used for the profit of others.

Most historians have used only written documents and official interpretations in their research. After the Rebellion the Indian people did not have the freedom or luxury of doing their own research and putting forward their own views. As a result, contemporary interpretations of the Indian role have remained very biased.

How the Rebellion Started

The first Indian involvement in the Rebellion is said to have been at the Duck Lake fight on 26 March 1885. A few Indians were among Gabriel Dumont's group of about thirty men; but then, considering that the fight itself occurred on Beardy's Reserve, it should not be so surprising that Indians were present at all. One of the least understood aspects of the Duck Lake fight is why one of Chief Beardy's Headmen (Assiyiwin) was shot during the purported parley preceding the fight. How did an old, half-blind, unarmed Headman of the Band become involved in the fracas?

What does Indian oral history have to say about this? The following story is told by Harry Michael of Beardy's Reserve. Harry Michael's grandfather was the nephew of Assiyiwin:

> Assiyiwin had gone to town, to Duck Lake to visit a friend, a half-breed by the name of Wolfe. Over there he heard that there was going to be some trouble. Something very bad was going to happen. He had gone to town on horseback and he bought some goods from the store in Duck Lake which he tied on his saddle. He then started walking home. The town of Duck Lake was not too far from the camp.

The old man had very poor eyesight — he was almost blind. And as he was approaching the reserve and the camp he noticed something. He heard a lot of voices, a lot of talking. But he could not see anything until he came near the people.

It was then a half-breed spoke to him — called in Cree and said, "Stop! Don't you know what is going to happen?"

Assiyiwin said, "I am blind. Exactly what is it?"

The half-breed answered, "There is going to be a battle. Didn't you hear about it?"

Assiyiwin answered, "Yes, I heard about it."

The half-breed replied, "You have walked right into it. Turn back where you came from."

Assiyiwin answered, "Ha! I cannot turn back. I'm going home. This is my reserve land. If you are going to have a battle, if you are going to spill blood, you cannot do it on our reserve land." And he remained standing there with his horse.

The half-breed said, "Go back where you came from."

Assiyiwin replied, "No, I am going home."

This half-breed threw his coat to Assiyiwin. His name was Joe McKay. He said, "Step over my coat ... I'll shoot you."

That was the time when Assiyiwin heard someone saying while he was standing there, "Don't shoot each other. Don't shoot." It was said in Cree. It was a half-breed. He must have been very brave, coming into the centre of the two sides of the people on horseback, half-breeds and Indians on one side and the Northwest [*sic*] Mounted Police on the other side. He was trying to tell the people not to shoot each other. He came running from the half-breed side. He did not know the name of this man. He was waving his hands shouting, "Don't shoot each other! People are trying to find a way on how they can get along better. Don't try and kill each other." He got as far as their location.

It was then Assiyiwin stepped over and passed the coat of McKay and said, "I am going home."

Assiyiwin witnessed the days of intertribal [*sic*] battles with the Blackfeet. Assiyiwin performed some brave acts when he had the strength and power in his legs. He had some scalps in a wooden box. He had fought and killed in battles and scalped. This was a brave man. That is why he did not back out from Joe McKay's orders. He refused Joe McKay and stepped over past the coat and said he was going to go on home. He was not about to get frightened. His bravery must have returned to him in spite [of the fact] that he was an old man.

The gun went off and fired. McKay shot the old man Assiyiwin

> down, hitting him in the stomach. Then there were blasts of gunfire coming from all directions.
>
> They came later after the old man. He didn't die right away that night. He died at sunrise the following morning. He was the first Cree Indian killed. That's how my grandfather told this story."[2]

The official interpretation of the event at Duck Lake was that Beardy's Band had joined the Rebellion. The story of Assiyiwin, however, presents an entirely different view. An older man, with poor eyesight, Assiyiwin was hardly likely to be associating with young fighters. Moreover, as one of Beardy's Headmen, he probably shared Beardy's disassociation from Riel's activities, and Beardy's dislike of intruders on their Indian reserve land.

It appears that Assiyiwin's mistake was being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and being too bold in asserting his indignation at what was occurring. Gabriel Dumont did not see his brother Isidore or Assiyiwin approach Crozier and McKay. What was probably not so much a parley as an effort to defuse a tense situation turned into a senseless slaughter when Joe McKay pulled his trigger.

It later became clear that Chief Beardy had not ordered his men to support the Rebellion, yet through the incident at Duck Lake the Indian people were fully implicated.

Indian Treaties were a Commitment to Peace

In order to more clearly understand the Indian attitude at the time of the Rebellion, one has to look back to the period prior to the signing of the treaties. Indian Nations waged tremendous battles against each other as a result of inter-tribal conflicts created by the expansion of the fur trade. In some battles between the Cree and the Blackfoot, such as that on the Oldman River in 1870, several hundred warriors were killed. An even greater killer — the epidemics — wiped out over half of the tribes in some outbreaks. The result of all of this was the drastic depopulation of the Indian Nations, and an increasing awareness among Indian leaders that their Nations had to come to grips with a very fundamental and real issue — that of survival.

Because of these experiences a strong peace movement began to develop among the Indian Nations. One famous peacemaker was the Cree Chief Maskipitoon, who strove to mend relations between the Cree and the Blackfoot during the 1860s. He eventually fell victim to a misguided warrior's bullet. The adoption of the Cree Poundmaker by the Blackfoot Chief Crowfoot was another important development in the cementing of peaceful relations between the two Nations.

It was because of this sentiment for peace that Indian leaders were receptive to the signing of treaties in the 1870s. Not only had Indians never been at war with whites in the North-West, but they also sought to prevent such a thing from ever happening. Treaty Six stated, "they will maintain peace and good order between each other, and also between themselves and others of Her Majesty's subjects."[3] To Indian Nations, that was one of the most important principles of the treaty.

For Indians, the signing of treaties was far more than a political act — it was also a sacred act. By the ceremony of smoking the Sacred Pipe, the Indian people pledged before the Creator that they would uphold the treaties. As Senator John Tootoosis puts it, "We signed an agreement with the Crown, with the Queen not to fight any more. We were to live in peace. We had to live up to this Treaty. We promised in the name of the Creator to keep the Treaty. The Indian people feared offending the Creator."[4] If the treaty was ever broken, it would not be the Indian people who broke it first.

Around the time of the Rebellion, white people did not fully appreciate the commitment of the Indian people. They had the perception that Indian people were no more than hunters and warriors. When the Marquis of Lorne, Queen Victoria's son-in-law, met Poundmaker in 1881, he expected to hear many war stories, and was surprised that instead he heard mainly about the spiritual and political ideas of the Indian people.

The Solutions to Treaty Problems would be Political

The Indian leadership was aware that there were serious shortcomings in the implementation of the treaties. In the Councils of the political leaders the focus of attention was on the dissatisfaction being experienced by those Indians settling on reserves. During those days of "The Time of the Great Hunger," Indians were seeing few of the benefits promised them under the treaty. The meager rations provided to them did little to stop the loss of life. Between 1880 and 1885 the Indian population dropped from 32,549 to 20,170 — a death rate of nearly 10 percent per year.[5]

At the Duck Lake Council, held in early August of 1884, Indian leaders presented a list of eighteen specific treaty grievances including complaints about untamed horses and cows, inadequate rations, poor implements, lack of schools and medical assistance and general dissatisfaction with government measures. The report on their presentation stated "that requests for redress of their grievances have been again and again made without effect. They are glad that the young men have not resorted to violent measures to gain it. That it is almost too hard for them to bear the treatment received at the hands of the government after its 'sweet promises' made in order to get their country from them. They now fear that they are going to be cheated. They will wait until next summer to see if this council has the desired effect, failing which they will take measures to get what they desire. (The proposed 'measures' could not be elicited, but a suggestion of the idea of war was repudiated.)"[6]

One measure being proposed by the Chiefs was a meeting of the Grand Council to be held on Little Pine's Reserve in 1885. The Blackfoot would be invited to attend. Once a united position was agreed upon, a delegation of Chiefs would travel to Ottawa where it was believed someone with sufficient authority could make some changes.

Thus, the Indian people were charting their own course of action to deal with Indian problems. It was a plan which called for concerted political action, and under it any outbreak of violence would be viewed as an undesirable course of events.

The Spread of the Rebellion Tests Indian Loyalties

Following the outbreak of hostilities at Duck Lake, Riel, attempting to spark a Territory-wide insurrection, sent messengers to many reserves urging the Indians to join him. The response of most Indian leaders was to send messages to government authorities reaffirming their loyalty.

On 28 March 1885, a delegation of Touchwood Chiefs sent a message expressing "to his Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor and through him to the Governor-General, their loyalty to their Great Mother the Queen, and further wish to express their disapproval of the course of action pursued by those at the head of the present struggle."[7]

At a meeting called by Riel's messengers at the Crooked Lakes Reserves, the Indians decided to remain loyal. Chief Kahkewistahaw made the following statement: "Agent, you remember the time I promised I would go to my reserve. I also said that I and my young men's fighting days were over. I stick to those words no matter what may be done up north, we will remain on our reserves and attend to our work."[8]

Chief Piapot, the main Cree leader in the South, wrote: "It is eleven years since I gave up fighting. When I took the government Treaty I touched the pen not to interfere with the whiteman and the whiteman not to interfere with me."[9]

Also on 28 March, Indian Agent Rae visited old Chief Mosquito on his reserve a few miles south of Battleford and received the Chief's assurances that the Band would remain loyal. At about the same time, Riel's messengers were visiting both Mosquito's and Red Pheasant's Reserves.

On Mosquito's Reserve a Band member named Itka had been grieving over the death of his daughter, which he blamed on Farm Instructor Payne. A few days before her death, Payne had physically thrown the frail girl out of his house. Itka decided the time was opportune for revenge, went to the Farm Instructor's home and shot him dead. Relatives of Itka, convinced that Canadian authorities would conduct an American-style retaliation against them, decided that their best alternative would be to seek refuge. They went to the house of Barney Tremont, a local farmer, demanding horses. When Tremont refused, he was shot and killed.

While these events were occurring on the Mosquito Reserve, Chiefs Poundmaker and Little Pine, concerned about the outbreak at Duck Lake, decided to travel to Battleford to express their loyalty to the Queen. Poundmaker also decided that at the same time he would take the opportunity to attempt to gain government concessions for food and other treaty provisions. Hearing this, most of the Band members decided to accompany their Chiefs in the hope that they would be present for the distributions.

The two Chiefs and their followers met with Chief Young Sweetgrass on 28 March at the Sweetgrass Reserve, about ten miles west of Battleford. Farm Instructors Jefferson and Craig debated whether or not they should accompany the Indians to Battleford, but decided against it for fear of disapproval by their superiors, who wanted Indians to remain on their reserves.

Also present was Peter Ballantyne, who was operating as a spy for Edgar Dewdney. He checked on the Indians' plans and came to the conclusion that their intentions were peaceful.

Meanwhile in Battleford, rumours were rampant that Poundmaker was approaching to attack the town.

Battleford — the Siege that Never Occurred

When Poundmaker and his followers reached Battleford on the morning of 30 March, they were surprised to find the town deserted. The residents had taken refuge in the North West Mounted Police Barracks on the other side of the river.

Poundmaker sent a message to the fort stating his peaceful intentions and requesting a meeting with Indian Agent Rae. Rae refused to leave the fort, but Peter Ballantyne and Hudson's Bay Company Factor McKay came out to meet Poundmaker. McKay agreed to release food to the Indians from the Hudson's Bay Company store.

Governor Dewdney was sent a telegram stating, "Indians willing to go back to reserves tomorrow if their demands for clothing are met. Strongly urge you to deal with them as we are not in a position at present to begin an Indian war."[10] Dewdney later replied, although too late, that he would meet with Poundmaker.

There were other groups who had arrived at Battleford — some of the Stoneys from Mosquito's Reserve, and Riel's agitators from Duck Lake. As Ballantyne and McKay were returning to the fort after failing to arrange talks with Rae, some of the Métis took shots at them. Later that day, some of the Stoneys began to break into stores and loot. Poundmaker and Little Pine tried to restrain their followers from looting, but with only limited success.

By the next morning, Poundmaker and most of his followers were on their way home. The strain of the troubles was too great for Little Pine, who had been suffering from temporary blindness and other symptoms of starvation. He died on 31 March 1885, a few miles before reaching his reserve. Little Pine's death, and that of old Chief Red Pheasant a few days earlier, meant that Poundmaker had become the main Indian leader in the Battleford area.

Accounts of the siege were blown well out of proportion. The telegraph line had not been tampered with, allowing the Battleford residents to send out daily messages of alarm. During the twenty-five days before relief troops arrived, the five hundred settlers barricaded in the fort were even able to obtain water safely from their only source a mile outside of the barracks. According to one observer, "one solitary individual — the cook — had the temerity to continue in residence at the old government house. He had many visitors that day, gave them to eat, when they departed without harming him."[11]

Interestingly enough, another observer reported, "They [the Indians] had been too hurried to take much; the principal looting was the work of white men. As soon as the coast was clear in the morning they came over in detachments and finished what the Indians had begun. They made a clean sweep."[12]

Not the least of these raiders was Farm Instructor Craig, who "devoted his time and attention to looting the stores and houses that had been broken into by the Indians, but his enterprise was frustrated by persistent robbing of his tent whenever he left it."[13]

Several observers were of the opinion that looting would never have taken place had the townspeople not deserted their houses and stores. By and large, the "siege" was a fabricated event.

Big Bear's Misfortune Peaks at Frog Lake

Big Bear had become the principal leader of the northern Plains Cree in 1877, following the death of Chief Sweetgrass. Unfortunately, he had a poor relationship with the government. One of the tactics used by the government during treaty negotiations had been to fail to send notification of the meetings to Indian leaders who were considered difficult to deal with. Such was the reason for Big Bear's arrival at Fort Pitt a day after Treaty Six had been signed.

During a speech objecting to the lack of consultation with the several Bands he was representing, Big Bear said:

> I have come off to speak for the different bands that are out on the Plains. It is no small matter we were to consult about. I expected the Chiefs here would have waited until I arrived. ...I heard the Governor was to come and I said I shall see him; when I see him I will request that he will save me from that which I most dread, that is: the rope to be about my neck, it was not given to us by the Great Spirit that the red man or the white man should shed each other's blood.[14]

The official treaty interpreter had already left and Reverend McKay, whose mastery of Cree was far from perfect, misinterpreted Big Bear's words to mean a fear of hanging (ayhahkotit). Big Bear was actually saying that he did not wish to lose his freedom, like an animal with a rope around its neck (aysakapaykinit).[15] Nevertheless, the impression created of Big Bear was that he was evil and cowardly, an image which would haunt him up to his final days.

Steadfast in his belief that he could get a revision of Treaty Six, similar to those of Treaties One and Two, Big Bear held out from signing Treaty Six longer than any other Chief. He was forced to sign six years later, when it became clear that his Band members would starve unless they obtained government rations.

In 1884, after years of urging, Big Bear agreed to choose a reserve next to Poundmaker's. Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs Lawrence Vankoughnet, a man who disliked Big Bear, vetoed the plan, suggesting that it would not be a good idea to have too many "idle Indians" in one area. Instead, Vankoughnet warned Big Bear to take a reserve already set aside near Fort Pitt — a location which Big Bear had already rejected — or face a cut-off of rations during the winter of 1884–85. Big Bear refused to comply.

An unhealthy blend of ingredients was being mixed. Many members of Big Bear's Band, including his son Imases and the War Chief Wandering Spirit, were becoming frustrated with the state of affairs. Compounding the problem was the presence of Indian Agent Quinn, a man known to have been abusive to Indians, and Farm Instructor Delaney, who had been accused of violating Indian women. The government was aware of the unpopularity of these men with the Indians, and had been planning to relocate them.

News of the Duck Lake fight did not reach Agent Quinn until late on 31 March 1885. The next day, 1 April or "Big Lie Day," as the Indians called it, Quinn summoned Big Bear's Band members to inform them of the incident. Imases, speaking on behalf of Big Bear, who was out hunting for food for the Band, replied:

> They have already risen; we knew about it before you. They have beaten the soldiers in the first fight, killing many. We do not wish to join the half-breeds, but we are afraid. We wish to stay here and prove ourselves the friends of the white man.[16]

Imases then asked Quinn to provide rations to the Band. Quinn refused, saying he would have to speak to Big Bear first.

Later that day Big Bear returned empty-handed from hunting and led a delegation to request rations from Quinn. Big Bear was upset at his refusal. Imases, hoping to win a compromise, suggested that Quinn give the Indians food for a feast as a gift to the Band, and he would not then have to call it rations. Quinn, however, had decided to give them nothing.

That night, unknown to Big Bear, Wandering Spirit and several members of the Rattler's Warrior Society held a dance in secret. As dawn broke some twenty armed warriors came to the Frog Lake community, waking up the residents and herding them to Quinn's house.

That morning, when asked for food and other supplies, Quinn was willing to comply, and various Indians were allowed to have goods from the stores.

That day was Holy Thursday, and two priests who had come for the occasion asked permission to hold church services. The hostages were all allowed to attend church. By this time Big Bear had learned of the trouble and had joined the whites in the church to ensure that nothing worse occurred.

As the church service progressed the noise outside increased. The warriors had broken into the stores and had found wine, spirits and painkillers. As these were consumed the shouting and yelling of the warriors grew louder, and they eventually began to enter the church and disrupt the service.[17]

Big Bear decided to leave the church and begin warning the other residents of the community, who were in their houses, to leave in case trouble broke out. He was at Mrs. Simpson's house when he heard shots. The church service had been cut short.

Wandering Spirit, the War Chief, ordered the whites to go to the Indian camp, a short distance away. Quinn refused to move, and after repeated warnings Wandering Spirit shot him dead.

Big Bear ran outside, yelling at the warriors to stop it, but it was too late. Urged on by the prompting of Wandering Spirit, the warriors soon killed eight white men.

Perhaps the violence would have been averted had Quinn simply given food to the starving Band the day before. It did not appear that the Band was thinking seriously of any sort of insurrection at that time. Even on the following day, had Quinn been liberal with Indian requests for food and simply complied with the warriors' orders, it is possible that bloodshed could have been averted entirely. The presence of alcohol and painkillers can be the only explanation for the gruesomeness of the murders. In Indian thinking, it was considered dishonourable and cowardly to kill an unarmed man for no reason at all.

Big Bear's hopes of peaceful dealings with government had all but vanished, yet he distinguished himself by protecting the lives of the remaining white captives, and by preventing greater bloodshed at Fort Pitt.

The warriors moved to seize the provisions at Fort Pitt on 14 April. Big Bear, no longer in control of the Band, argued for an attempt to arrange a peaceful surrender of the Fort. He held the warriors back for one night, and the next day persuaded forty-four civilians to surrender to the Band. With this achieved, the North West Mounted Police detachment had little reason to stay, and was allowed to escape down the river by boat. Big Bear's vigilance was an important factor in preventing any deaths among them.

The Unprovoked Attack on Cutknife Hill

Although Poundmaker had been forced to relinquish power to the warrior society, he was influential in maintaining calm among the Indians camped at Cutknife Hill following the so-called siege of Battleford.

Lieutenant-Colonel Otter arrived at Battleford on 24 April 1885 with close to 550 troops. Also, part of his arsenal was a Gatling gun sent for demonstration by the United States Army.

Otter's troops were sorely disappointed at not seeing action on arrival at Battleford. Otter had been ordered by Middleton to stay at Battleford and guard the townspeople. Sensing the unrest of his troops, and seeing the opportunity to gain personal glory, Otter wired Dewdney, "I propose taking part of my force at once to punish Poundmaker leaving 100 men to garrison Battleford. Great depredations committed. Immediate decisive action necessary. Do you approve?"[18]

Dewdney, probably after consulting the Prime Minister, wired Otter with approval.

Otter planned to surprise Poundmaker and force him to surrender. On the evening of 28 April, he left Battleford for Cutknife Hill. Otter's timing was good, and he arrived at the foot of Cutknife Hill at 5:15 the following morning. Fortunately for Poundmaker's camp, an old man, Jacob With the Long Hair, was awake and heard the sounds of the approaching soldiers. He ran through the camp shouting warnings.

At that point, Otter ordered his guns to open fire on the sleeping camp. The barrage knocked over some tipis, but all of the occupants managed to scramble to safety.

Some of the Indian warriors ran out to confront the troops while others began shooting from nearby coulees. According to Robert Jefferson, an eyewitness, "Not more than 50 [Indians] altogether, had taken part in the battle. This was excusable since few were armed,..."[19] As the battle continued throughout the morning, Otter realized that his troops were in a vulnerable position and were slowly being surrounded. Just before noon, he ordered his men to retreat.

The warriors wanted to pursue Otter. Knowing the land like the backs of their hands and gaining the advantage of nightfall, the warriors could have inflicted heavy casualties on the tiring soldiers. Poundmaker refused to agree, maintaining that while the Indians were right in defending themselves on their land, it would be wrong to go on the offensive.

There had been a split among the people at Cutknife Hill. On the one side was the pro-Riel faction consisting of the Métis agitators and the Stoney warriors. On the other side were those led by Poundmaker who wanted to have as little as possible to do with the Rebellion. Poundmaker had tried to lead his followers west towards the hilly country around Devil's Lake, with plans to eventually take refuge near Crowfoot, but the warriors and Métis prevented them from leaving.

Poundmaker was essentially being used as a spokesman by the belligerent faction. An example of this was a letter to Riel dictated by Riel's sympathizers but bearing the 'signatures' of Poundmaker and several other Indians. Poundmaker's lack of verbal or written knowledge of either French or English put him at a great disadvantage. The fact was that Poundmaker was not in control, and the insinuation of support for Riel contained in the letter was out of character with his actions. That letter later became the main piece of evidence used in convicting Poundmaker.

Following the Battle of Cutknife Hill, it was decided that it was no longer safe to remain on the reserve. When the pro-Riel faction decided to join Riel at Batoche, Poundmaker attempted to lead his followers west, away from trouble. The dispute nearly led to bloodshed, but Poundmaker's poorly armed followers relented. Poundmaker's lack of cooperation and additional efforts to break away from the camp slowed the Indians' progress to Batoche by several days.

Poundmaker's stalling tactics saved many Indian lives, for as they neared Batoche on 14 May, they received news that Middleton's army had just defeated the Métis. After some discussion, Poundmaker sought terms of surrender from Middleton; when refused, he surrendered unconditionally at Battleford on 26 May 1885.

Poundmaker's plan to abandon his reserve and seek refuge by moving to an isolated area was not unique. A significant number of Band members, from reserves such as Mosquito's, Red Pheasant's, One Arrow's and Thunderchild's, went north to avoid any involvement in the troubles.

During this period, Sir John A. Macdonald was attempting to exploit tribal differences by inquiring about sending Indian patrols against Poundmaker and Big Bear. He wrote Dewdney on 29 March 1885, "I understand that the Crees dread the Blackfeet like the devil. Now a corps of scouts under Crowfoot might be formed."[20] Because of the relationship between Crowfoot and Poundmaker this plan never succeeded, despite repeated requests from the Prime Minister.

At Batoche Against Their Will

Part of the strategy of Riel's Provisional Government was based on the belief that they held influence over the Indians. In a note to the English half-breeds on 22 March 1885, they wrote, "We are sure that if the English and French half-breeds unite well in this time of crisis, not only can we control the Indians, but we will also have their weight on our side."[21] With Indians outnumbering both Métis and whites in the North-West, their support in a conflict could be critical, but the presumption of Indian involvement was made without consultation with any of the Indian leaders.

On 18 March 1885, one day before Riel's proclamation of his Provisional Government, that process of "controlling" Indians began. About forty Riel supporters arrived at One Arrow's Reserve, approximately two miles east of Batoche, taking the Indian Agent and Farm Instructor prisoner. The next day, One Arrow and fifteen of his men came to Batoche. As One Arrow testified at his trial,

> I am an old man now. ...I was taken to the place, Batoche's, to join Riel by Gabriel. I did not take myself to the place. They took me there. I could not say how many there were of them that took me there, but there was quite a number of them. ...so when I went there and got there I was taken prisoner.[22]

Witnesses testified that One Arrow was seen in the area during both the Duck Lake fight and the Battle of Batoche. In his defense, One Arrow testified that,

> All that was said against me was thrown upon me falsely. I did not take up my gun with the intention to shoot at any man. I was on the brink of the hill the whole day, and I had my gun there, but, of course, not with the intention to use the gun against any man, and when I saw the whitemen coming down, I ran down the hill too, and ran off.[23]

On 10 April 1885, around twenty Riel supporters arrived at Whitecap's Reserve, a few miles south of Saskatoon. Whitecap, the Chief of a Band of refugee American Dakota, had resisted Riel's overtures two weeks previous. Before the Métis began forcing Whitecap and twenty of his men towards Batoche Whitecap managed to send a message to a white friend in Saskatoon, Gerald Willoughby, asking him for assistance. When the group reached Saskatoon, a group of nine citizens tried to persuade the Métis to allow Whitecap to return to his reserve. Outnumbered, their attempt was unsuccessful.

When Whitecap arrived at Batoche, he was appointed the only Indian member of Riel's council on internal matters, but because he understood neither French nor Cree, he attended only one meeting.

Whitecap's men were seen at the battles of Fish Creek and Batoche. Testimony provided by the main prosecution witnesses showed that Whitecap could not be positively identified as having been among the several old Indian men at Batoche, but it was mainly because of the evidence showing that Whitecap had been coerced to fight that all charges against him were dropped.[24]

The Indian Trials: Unwarranted Punishment

Poundmaker, despite evidence of his efforts to maintain peace, was convicted of treason–felony on the basis of the letter to Riel bearing his name. Speaking after hearing the guilty verdict, Poundmaker categorically denied any wrongdoing, saying, "Everything that is bad has been laid against me this summer, there is nothing of it true."[25] On hearing that he was sentenced to three years at Stony Mountain, Poundmaker declared, "I would prefer to be hung at once than to be in that place."[26] Poundmaker was released in the spring of 1886, largely because of public sympathy, but he died in June after making a trek on foot to visit his adoptive father Crowfoot.

Although the evidence was strongly in favour of Big Bear, it appeared that the outcome of his trial was predetermined, and he was sentenced to the same three-year term as Poundmaker. There was less public sympathy for Big Bear, and he was not released until 3 February 1887, after a medical report confirmed his badly deteriorating health. He had no Band to return to, as it had been dispersed by the government. Most of his family he would never see, as they were fugitives in the United States. With his heart broken and no cause to live for, he died on 18 January 1888.

When Chief One Arrow heard the charges of treason-felony translated to him, it came out in Cree as "knocking off the Queen's bonnet and stabbing her in the behind with a sword."[27] This moved One Arrow to ask the interpreter if he was drunk. The conviction of One Arrow was based on his presence at the battle sites, and his account of how he came to be there was ignored.

One Arrow was not so fortunate as to make it back to his own reserve. He was released from Stony Mountain Prison on 21 April 1886, and died four days later at Archbishop Taché's residence in St. Boniface. He was baptised just before his death and lies in St. Boniface cemetery in an unmarked grave.

In order to save money, a decision was made not to hold all of the Rebellion trials at Regina. Several of them were held in Battleford instead. The atmosphere in Battleford was not hospitable towards Indians, as an editorial written in the *Saskatchewan Herald* on 23 April 1885, shows:

> The petted Indians are the bad ones. The Stonies have been treated as being of a superior race, and are the first to shed the blood of their benefactors. Poundmaker has been petted and feted, and stands in the front rank as a raider. Little Pine, bribed to come north and kept in comfort, hastens to the carnage. Big Bear, who has for years enjoyed the privilege of eating of the bread of idleness, shows his gratitude by killing his priests and his best friends in cold blood. Little Poplar, a non-treaty Indian has been liberally supplied with provisions and other necessaries and thus enabled to spend all his time in travelling up and down the land plotting mischief and preparing for this season's carnival of ruin. The petted Indians have proved the bad ones, and this gives weight to the old adage that the only good Indians are the dead ones.[28]

Judge Rouleau, who would pass the judgements, had narrowly missed being murdered along with Farm Instructor Payne, and was also bitter about the burning of his mansion at Battleford. He was known before the trials to advocate harsh punishment as a deterrent to future rebellious acts by Indians.

The eight Indians eventually hanged were at a disadvantage. They knew nothing of the legal system and had no legal counsel or other advice. No effective defense of any sort was mounted which might have created sympathy for the defendants — for example, the reality of their starvation under Indian Affairs administration, or the excesses brought on by alcohol and drugs at the Frog Lake massacre.

Several Indian Elders are certain that at least one of the Indians, Man-Without-Blood, was wrongly hanged for the shooting of Farm Instructor

Payne. They claim it was done by the other Stoney, Man-With-A-Black-Blanket. According to one story,

> The two of the Stoney young men were arrested also. They were accused of killing the farm instructor and they were both arrested. And at that time people were very respectable. There was a lot of respect for the older people. Now the one who did not kill the Indian Agent, he was the one who was accused by his partner. So the one who was accused of killing the farm instructor, when he went to trial, the officer asked him, "Is it true what you did? Or is it not true?" He replied, "Maybe it is true, and maybe it is not." And he really had nothing to do with it, he didn't shoot the Indian Agent. So when he said, "Maybe they are telling the truth," that was accepted as his plea, as telling the truth. So he got the blame for the death of the farm instructor. So he was one of them that got hanged. They weren't going to sympathize with him or feel sorry for him."[29]

According to another story, "It's him who killed the ration feeder. And the one who followed him shot the dog. He was the one who got hung instead, said my father, the one who shot the dog. He did not want to report his partner."[30]

No clear evidence of committing murder was shown against Iron Body and Little Bear, two of the six Indians tried for their role in the Frog Lake massacre. They were hanged on the basis that, by aiding and abetting the others, they were equally guilty.

Four Sky Thunder received a sentence of fourteen years for burning down the Frog Lake church. Another Indian, whose only wrongdoing was having been seen with Big Bear, was sentenced to six years in prison.[31]

Several Indians were never brought to justice. Among them was Man-Who-Speaks-Our-Language, who nearly caused the outbreak of fighting with the North West Mounted Police on Poundmaker's Reserve in 1884, and was responsible for some of the killings at Frog Lake.

The hangings at Battleford took place on 27 November 1885. Indians from several reserves were there to witness the event.

A new section was built at Stony Mountain Penitentiary to accommodate the twenty-five Indians and eighteen Métis sentenced to prison. Several of the Indians never returned to their reserves, and are buried in the St. Boniface cemetery.

The Aftermath: Suppression of Indians

The government saw the rebellion as an opportunity to achieve a goal which had eluded it since 1870, that of gaining total control over Indians. In July of 1885, Assistant Commissioner Hayter Reed drew up a list of fifteen recommendations on actions to be taken following the Rebellion. Among these were the following:

> The leaders of the Teton Sioux who fought against the troops should be hanged and the rest be sent out of the country;
>
> Big Bear's band should either be broken up and scattered

> among other bands or be given a reserve adjacent to that at Onion Lake;
>
> One Arrow's band should be joined with that of Beardy and Okemasis and their reserve surrendered;
>
> No annuity money should be now paid any bands that rebelled, or to any individuals that joined the insurgents;
>
> The tribal system should be abolished in so far as is compatible with the Treaty;
>
> All half-breeds, members of rebel bands, although not shown to have taken any active part in the rebellion, should have their names erased from the paysheets;
>
> No rebel Indians should be allowed off the Reserves without a pass signed by an Indian Department official; and
>
> All Indians who have not during the late troubles been disloyal or troublesome should be treated as heretofore.[32]

Reed had also prepared a list of every Indian Band in the North-West and had identified twenty-eight disloyal Bands. In his enthusiasm he erroneously included several reserves, such as Sweetgrass and Thunderchild, which had been very loyal. Most of the others had actually been loyal, with only the odd individual implicated in the Rebellion. Of all the Bands identified as disloyal in the Rebellion, it is clear that none of the Chiefs, whether Big Bear, Poundmaker, Mosquito, Red Pheasant, Little Pine, Beardy, One Arrow or Whitecap, politically supported the Rebellion. All were drawn into the conflict by circumstances beyond their personal control. In all, less than 5 percent of the Indian population of the North-West was involved.

The original proposal to disallow rebel Indians from leaving their reserves without a pass soon became a measure to be applied to all Indians. In approving this plan, Sir John A. Macdonald was aware that he was contravening the treaties. He noted:

> Mr. Dewdney thinks that the pass system can be generally introduced in July. If so, it is in the highest degree desirable. As to the disloyal Bands, this should be carried out as the consequence of their disloyalty. The system should be introduced in the loyal Bands as well and the advantage of the change pressed upon them. But no punishment for breaking bounds could be inflicted and in the case of resistance on the grounds of Treaty rights should not be insisted on.[33]

The measures taken against Indians, in particular those restricting them to reserves, were measures which would have a profound effect on subsequent Indian developments. What little influence Indian people had over their own lives was removed, and Indian people became vulnerable to government whim, manipulation and mismanagement.

It was regrettable that Sir John A. Macdonald, who was Superintendent General of Indian Affairs and Prime Minister, never once bothered to visit the people over whom he had charge during the eight critical years he held office, from 1879 to 1887.

Had the Indian people been able to retain their freedom of movement, things might have turned out much differently. Big Bear and other Indian leaders might have met Sir John A. Macdonald in 1885. Nationally, efforts to form the League of Indians of Canada in the 1920s and the North American Indian Brotherhood in the 1940s would have been more successful and probably would have received the bulk of their strength from the prairies. Indian political development in Canada was probably put back by two generations.

The Rebellion has left a legacy of a century of suspicions about Indian political abilities and loyalties, and misconceptions about the validity of Indian treaties.

In concluding, I would say that a clear understanding of the Indian view of the 1885 Uprising is the least that can be done to right the blunders of the past.

NOTES

1 Florence Paul, interview by Wilfred Tootoosis, One Arrow Indian Reserve, 15 March 1985.

2 Harry Michael, interview by Wilfred Tootoosis, Beardy's Indian Reserve, 14 March 1985.

3 Canada, *Treaty Number Six Between Her Majesty the Queen and the Plain and Wood Cree Indians and other Tribes of Indians* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1964), 5.

4 John B. Tootoosis, interview by Wilfred Tootoosis, Poundmaker Indian Reserve, 30 November 1984.

5 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1886, No. 36, 2.

6 Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), RG 10, Vol. 3697, File 15,423, MacRae to Dewdney, 25 August 1884.

7 PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3584, File 1130, Pt. 3A, McBeath to Macdonald, 28 March 1885.

8 PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3584, File 1130, Pt. 3A, Macdonald to Indian Commissioner, 8 April 1885.

9 PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3584, File 1130, Pt. 3A, Piapot to Macdonald, 30 April 1885.

10 Dewdney Papers, Vol. 5, 1879–1880, Rae to Dewdney, 30 March 1885.

11 Robert Jefferson, *Fifty Years on the Saskatchewan* (Battleford: Canadian Northwest Historical Society, 1929), 127.

12 Ibid., 128.

13 Ibid., 126.

14 Alexander Morris, *Treaties of Canada With The Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* (Toronto: Coles Publishing Limited, 1971), 239.

15 Hugh Dempsey, *Big Bear - The End of Freedom* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984), 74.

16 W.B. Cameron, *Blood Red The Sun* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1977), 33.

17 Dempsey, *Big Bear*, 155.

18 Dewdney Papers, Vol. 5, p. 1806, Otter to Dewdney, 26 April 1885.

19 Jefferson, *Fifty Years*, 146.

20 PAC, MG 26A, Vol. 526, p. 1404, Macdonald to Dewdney, 29 March 1885.

21 Bob Beal and Rod Macleod, *Prairie Fire: the 1885 North-West Rebellion* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1984), 148.

22 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 1886, No. 52, 33.

23 Ibid., 32.

24 Ibid., 13.

25 Ibid., 336.

26 Ibid., 337.

27 Beal and Macleod, *Prairie Fire*, 309.

28 *Saskatchewan Herald*, (Battleford) 23 April 1885.

29 Lawrence Lonesinger, interview by Wilfred Tootoosis, Sweetgrass Indian Reserve, 13 March 1985.

30 Alex Sapp, interview by Wilfred Tootoosis, Little Pine Indian Reserve, date not available.

31 S.E. Bingaman, "The North-West Rebellion Trials, 1885" (Master's thesis, University of Regina, 1971), 133.

32 PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3710, File 19, 550-3, Reed to Dewdney, 20 July 1885.

33 PAC, RG 10, Vol. 3710, File 19, 550-3, Vankoughnet to Superintendent General, 17 August 1885.

Part II

The Aftermath: Native Society In Transition

Batoche After 1885, A Society in Transition

Diane Payment

Who were the Métis who came to Batoche?

Over 75 percent of the Métis or Métifs[1] who settled in the South Saskatchewan River district after 1870 were originally from the Red River Settlement of Manitoba. Many families had wintered in the vicinity of Fort Carlton at the *hivernement* of Petite-Ville (near present-day Fish Creek) and of Grosse-Butte (in the vicinity of present-day Humboldt) since the late 1850s. They called themselves *les gens libres*,[2] the free or independent people, an expression which in many ways characterized their *mentalité* and lifestyle. Theirs was a long tradition of independent hunting and trading activity in the North-West. Some of their Canadien forefathers built posts in the Saskatchewan district in the late eighteenth century while others worked for the North West Company and later the Hudson's Bay Company. They married Native women, mainly Cree and Saulteaux "à la façon du pays," establishing the important economic and social alliances so essential to the fur trade. Many Métis claimed Scottish or English, as well as Canadien-European ancestry. Place of residence, occupation, language, religion, *mentalité* and culture generally distinguished Métis from "half-breeds" in the settlements, although "ethnic lines" were often blurred. For example, intermarriage and economic interaction in the Red River Settlement from approximately 1810 to 1870 resulted in identification according to occupational as well as ethnic origins. Genealogical data on Red River families for that period suggests that more "half-breeds" integrated into Métis society than vice versa. Furthermore, the Métis were not a homogeneous group. Different Native and European origins, fur trade connections and occupations created various groups or classes. The common Canadien heritage, the *métchif* language and the Catholic religious tradition also produced a distinctive nationality and culture. "Nous sommes métifs!"[3] This national consciousness was first expressed at "La Grenouillère" in 1816, again at the Sayer trial in 1849 and culminated in the Red River Resistance in 1869-70.

The Métis who left Manitoba for *la fourche des Gros-Ventres* (South Saskatchewan River) after the *débâcle* of 1870 were mainly "Riel's People," or families that had supported the Provisional Government of Red River. Various hypotheses have been advanced for the Métis exodus from Manitoba to Saskatchewan. Did they leave for social reasons or unfavourable class position within Franco-Manitoban society, as suggested by Robert Painchaud,[4] or for various nationalistic and cultural considerations, such as family, homeland, fear of change and of dispossession by "outsiders"? Or, as suggested by Nicole St-Onge in her study of the Métis of Pointe-à-Grouette,[5] did they leave primarily because of economic and political considerations? In the case of Batoche, the comparative wealth and commercial initiative of its founders, more specifically Letendre, Boyer, Fisher and Venne, suggest the desire for new economic opportunities, while the familial character of the resettlement also lends credibility to the argument of social continuity in an area of their traditional "homeland" yet unclaimed by Euro-Canadians.

There were three main migrations before 1885, in the early 1870s, which was essentially the transitional period from the *hivernement*, or wintering camp of the hunting day, to the more permanent settlement associated with commercial and agricultural activities. Most of the approximately three hundred who settled in the new colony of St. Laurent during these early years,[6] had a *pied à terre* in the North-West since the 1860s. About fifty families arrived from Manitoba and other points in the Territories between 1877 and 1878 and over one hundred from Manitoba in 1882. By 1883, there were about thirteen hundred Métis established along both banks of the river between Gariépy's (or Gardepuis') Crossing to the north (present day St. Louis area) and *la coulée des Tourond*, south of Gabriel's Crossing, a distance of about fifty kilometres.[7] They came out in families, often representing three generations, and settled *en bloc* on lands which they developed according to the traditional river lot system. Although Batoche and surrounding communities suffered a decrease in population as a result of the armed resistance in 1885–86, most of the refugees had returned by 1888. Using the population figures of the parish of St. Antoine as an example, the high birth rate or *revanche des berceaux* of the 1885–1900 period ensured a stable population of about 450 until the 1920s.[8] The rural and village settlement of Batoche, founded by Xavier Letendre *dit* Batoche in 1872, did not grow substantially after 1885 but its people did not disperse or abandon their occupations. There were periods of increased economic activity in the early 1890s, the arrival of new families or *la parenté* from Manitoba in 1896, and *consolidation des forces* or regrouping of families on abandoned claims, at the turn of the century. The influx of French Canadian and French-speaking European settlers during that period also provided some reinforcement, particularly at St. Louis. Finally, the colonization efforts of Abbé Myre at Batoche in the 1920s, although essentially assimilationist in its attitudes towards the Métis, also provoked a certain resurgence of important cultural traditions and social values.

Some Aspects of Métis Society and Economy

A comprehensive inquiry into Métis society at Batoche between 1870 and approximately 1925, revealed a varied and complex class structure. Although the community possessed a certain homogeneity or common ethnic origin, occupation and social roles gradually distinguished various groups from one another. These differences became more evident at the height of the settlement, between about 1884 and 1895. The commercial activities of Xavier Letendre, Salomon Venne, Georges Fisher, Baptiste Boyer and Emmanuel Champagne placed them on top of the income scale. Letendre and Venne operated stores at Batoche, the headquarters for a network of trading posts in the Carrot River, Fort à la Corne, Meadow Lake and Ile-à-la-Crosse districts. They hired local traders, interpreters, freighting crews and store clerks for their businesses, farm labourers to cultivate their lands, and cowboys to raise their horses and cattle. Letendre and Venne both established ranches in the Minichinas Hills, south-east of Batoche in the 1870s. Their trading activities brought them to Winnipeg, Montréal and the northern United States.[9] Georges Fisher Jr., and his brothers Michel and Joseph of Fort Qu'Appelle, and Ambroise of Duck Lake, were members of an old Red River trading family, initially associated with the Hudson's Bay Company. Their cousins, Baptiste and William Boyer, also settled first in the Fort Qu'Appelle-Fishing Lakes district and then gradually opened stores at Batoche, St. Laurent and Green Lake. This merchant group had similar conservative political views, commercial interests, and interacted socially. The families were initially related through marriage and their children intermarried. As well, they held other positions of prestige within the community. For example, Fisher and Venne were Justices of the Peace, served periodically as postmasters, and sat on the parish council. Letendre was president of the school board and served on a variety of committees in the 1890s, more specifically the Union Nationale Métisse, which organized the annual National Feast Day. The elders did not have any formal education but they sent their sons to college in St. Boniface and their daughters to the convent school in Prince Albert.

Another group of Métis, less involved in commercial pursuits, but with a comparatively more European-oriented education and *mentalité*, also gained ascendance in the community. Among them were the politicians Charles Nolin, Maxime Lépine and Louis Schmidt in the 1880s, and Charles-Eugène Boucher, and Charles "Le Marquis" Fisher at the turn of the century. They held local government positions, directed public works contracts and distributed patronage benefits to friends and family. Others in this loosely identified "intellectual" or professional group were the school-teachers Octave Régnier of St. Louis, Jean Letendre of Fish Creek and Philippe Garnot of Gabriel's Crossing, as well as farmer-instructors Louis Marion at Beardy's reserve near Duck Lake, Maxime Lépine *fils* and Pantaléon Schmidt at One Arrow's near Batoche. The 1890s also witnessed the establishment of a North West Mounted Police detachment at Batoche. A few of the policemen, notably Sergeant St-Denis and Inspector Bégin married local Métis women and remained in the district beyond their term. "La Police," as they were called locally, employed the Métis as guides, interpreters, carpenters and general labourers, although few were recruited as constables.

By the turn of the century, the majority of Métis were part of a traditional labouring, but increasingly agricultural, group. Hunters of the 1870s were now trapping, fishing and cutting cordwood, while freighting of furs and trade goods remained a viable occupation for some. Hudson's Bay Company accounts suggest that although there was still some demand for freighting to and from northern points, the recruitment of Métis was becoming more difficult. In the words of one official: "The French [*sic*] seem to be afraid of Bull dogs and bad roads and will not take freight to Montréal Lake."[10] High risks, arduous labour, and low pay increasingly drew the young men away from this traditional occupation. More sons were migrating further west, seeking seasonal employment at Medicine Hat and ranching communities across the border in Montana. Skilled tradesmen such as carpenters Jean Caron and Joseph Pilon and ferry operator Jérôme Racette found local employment to supplement their farming activities, enabling their families to establish themselves and gain ascendancy in the community.

Social class or group identification evidently did not adhere to strict divisions according to occupation and social status. Other factors such as family ancestry, seniority, and a less tangible factor, prestige, also came into play. Formal education in the European sense was often not as valued as practical knowledge. A good example of this interplay is the case of Gabriel Dumont, Métis hunter, leader and military commander. He possessed some wealth, particularly before 1885, spoke a number of native languages and had extensive practical knowledge of traditional activities. His lineage, personality, and above all his initiative, also ensured him everlasting prestige in the community. There is also some evidence that non-conformity and resistance to the Euro-Canadian *mentalité* and life-style were a source of esteem. Batoche and surrounding communities were in transition at the turn of the century, hence the emergence of mobile and varied social groups.

The extended family was the basic feature of the Métis settlement and way of life. Gabriel's Crossing, Batoche, St. Laurent and St. Louis were largely distinguished by way of family networks or *cliques*: for example, the Vandals, Poitras and Fidlers around Gabriel's Crossing, the Parenteaus, Carons and Letendres of Batoche, and the Bouchers, Lépines and Nolins of St. Louis. Kinship provided stability and ensured interaction in the community-oriented society. Roles and behaviour were clearly defined. Elderly parents usually resided in a separate house on the family homestead and later with their youngest male child or heir. Métis society was patriarchal although elderly women exercised a certain authority. The role of women in the home and in submission to the *pater familias* was also reinforced by Catholic doctrine and European tradition. Few couples reached the age of fifty or experienced a "normal" family cycle. Widowed spouses invariably remarried and three households of fifteen children under the same roof (of his, hers and theirs) were not unusual. One lady interviewed, remarked that these situations or the more informal arrangements of some families (*femme empruntée, ménage à trois, enfants naturels*) were a source of sibling tension and anxiety, particularly for the girls who were more confined to the home under the authority of the *belle-mère*.[11] The men were freer to leave "quand ils commençaient à sentir la cabane."[12] Nevertheless, orphaned childen were always "adopted" by relatives and the sick and handicapped were assisted by the community. One of the problems of largely intermarried family units, as witnessed at Batoche by the early 1920s, was the emergence of congeneric diseases.[13] Ironically, this practice also helped maintain a distinct Métis nationality well into the twentieth century.

The persistence of customs such as *les visites de parenté* from Manitoba, Montana, and the closer parent communities of Lac Croche and Jackfish Lake, the "wintering" of cattle up north, the seasonal gathering of wild berries and herbs and a variety of cultural and religious celebrations, conveyed a distinctive character to Métis society at Batoche. Although clothing styles were primarily North American or European, the men still wore the *ceinture à flèche*, *souliers mous* and *capots de chat* as well as the newer *culottes crampées* and wide-rimmed cowboy hats.[14] Women's clothing styles reflected both Victorian modesty and elaborateness. The *couverte* or shawl remained a distinct feature of women's clothing well into the twentieth century. Métis foods, music and traditions reflected both their Native and Canadien ancestry, although written and oral accounts suggest a closer link to French Canadian customs. The Métis preferred deer meat or wild duck to chicken, but made a *fricassée* or meat stew called *rababou*, as well as *lard salé*, *courtons* (cretons) and especially *tourtières*. The *galette* or *banique* (bannock) was the staple food but the *beignes croches* (a type of donut) was derived from the French Canadian *croquignoles*. The Métis around Batoche were also fond of *avrignoles* (deep-fried spiced meat balls) and *poutines glissantes* (dumplings). A variety of wild fruit was ground into patties and later made into pies and puddings laced with heavy cream. They also made *piquette* (homemade wine), hop beer, preferred gin to whiskey, and drank large amounts of good strong tea referred to as *thé de pures*.

The *temps des fêtes* or celebrations surrounding Christmas and New Year's were mainly French Canadian in tradition. A *réveillon* was held at the home of Vieux-Jean Caron and Isidore Dumas, although not at Patrice Fleury's, while the *p'tit coup* and *embrassages* were *de rigueur* on New Year's Day.[15] An account in the *Prince Albert Times* in 1889 referred to the on-going festivities:

> At Batoche, during the holidays, balls are the order of the day. Two were held last night, one at Pilon's and the other at Daniel Charette's and the youngsters had all the chances of shaking themselves up.[16]

Another tradition, *la bénédiction paternelle*, or father's New Year's blessing, was also maintained and adapted to the new *milieu*. The granddaughter of Louis Schmidt recalled his special prayer:

> Sang de mon sang, fils (ou fille) de ma race, aujourd'hui groupés sous mon toît, de vos ancêtres suivez les traces, demeurez fidèles à la foi, conservez les usages laissés jadis par vos aïeux, gardez surtout votre langage.[17]

Weddings at Batoche were an occasion for large family gatherings and entertainment. The majority were held in January and February, between *les Rois* and Lent; usually commencing on a Tuesday, the party often lasted until Saturday. At Martin Lavallée's "le faiseur de noces par excellence, on commençait le mardi pour ne finir que le samedi soir, en chômant toutefois le vendredi."[18] The *veillées* were an important social pastime during the winter. At these gatherings, the old-timers told stories, often "des histoires de peur, de revenants"[19] and tapped their feet to the fiddle and "homemade" music while the young people danced jigs, *quadrilles*, *cotillons* and *châtises*.[20] There were many good singers in the area, in particular Patrice Parenteau, Eugène Boucher, and old Antoine Ferguson whose "J'ai fait une Maitresse" and "Sur le coup de ma bouteille" occasioned much laughter and joking remarks. Billiard games and card playing, especially progressive euchre and poker with a few bets on the side, much to Father Moulin's displeasure, were favoured by the men, while the women played more innocent games such as "trois pas d'amour" and "Madame demande sa toilette."[21]

The focus of Métis nationalism and culture was the annual "Fête des Métis," first celebrated at Batoche on 24 July 1887. It had both a religious and patriotic character. A banner representing St. Joseph, the patron saint of the Métis, on one side and St. Jean-Baptiste, the patron of the French Canadians on the other, chosen by Riel in 1884, was flown over the Jolie-Prairie, site of the event. By 1910, the Métis flag displayed a bison and *fleurs de lis* on a white background (with the addition of the Union Jack symbol on occasion).[22] The festival began with a Mass at St. Antoine, followed by a procession to the picnic area. The events included a variety of sports such as foot races, tugs of war, horse races and gun firing competitions, as well as patriotic speeches, craft displays, traditional music and foods. One of the main attractions was the ritualistic preparation of a steer donated by a member of the community. According to one account:

> Une des plus grandes attractions était de tuer un boeuf sur le champ, comme ils tuaient les buffalos autrefois. Moïse Ouellette fournissait l'animal. Ils tiraient à la flèche, au couteau. On faisait un bon feu. Le boeuf était preparé là, cuit sur la braise. On en donnait un morceau à tous les gens pour rien. C'était un vrai régal.[23]

"La fête nationale" maintained its original character and spirit until the early 1930s.

The pilgrimage of Our Lady of Lourdes at St. Laurent also reflected the religious and cultural traditions of the Métis. A grotto had been erected by Brother Piquet in 1884, but the celebration was inaugurated on 16 July 1906. Newspaper accounts of this event and personal testimonies of the Métis themselves suggest an intense, almost mystical, religious atmosphere. Less well documented, however, is the emergence of a blend of both Native and Christian beliefs and ceremonies in Métis religious expression. The *Messe Royale* was sung in Cree as well as in French and the miraculous cures were attributed to both Native medicine and Catholic ritual.[24]

The Métis at Batoche also adopted the French Canadian custom of descriptive sobriquets or nicknames. Some such as Pezzan Delorme, Wabash Parenteau and Mooswa Letendre were Cree in origin while Beaucasque Poitras, Ti-laid Parenteau, Trois-Pouces Carrière and Beau-blé Laverdure were French. Women also did not escape the sometimes complimentary, but often mocking form of address: *La bichonne* (Justine Branconnier) was fair haired and graceful, while *La Pie* (Alvina Boucher) and *La Boiteuse* (Henriette Letendre) accentuated less flattering characteristics.

There were many less positive aspects of increased interaction between Euro-Canadians and Métis of Batoche. Some of the tensions and problems experienced during the 1890s and early 1900s were a reflection of white prejudices towards Native peoples. Immigrant groups who abstained from liquor or were strong advocates of the work ethic referred to the

Métis as "une gang de buveurs et de paresseux."[25] There is evidence that many young men in the community turned to liquor in these difficult transitional years of few jobs and social ostracization of the "descendants of the rebels." "Survivra qui pourra!"[26] declared Jean Letendre, son of the founder of Batoche. Tuberculosis reached almost epidemic proportions at the turn of the century, weakening the general health of surviving family members. "Accidental" deaths, "troubled" minds, abandonment of families, and a variety of petty crimes, were on the increase in a society disrupted by too rapid social change and foreign values. As a francophone minority group, the Métis were also increasingly subject to discriminatory educational and language legislation by the Territorial government. Concurrently, the French-speaking communities around Batoche generally disassociated themselves from their less fortunate *compatriotes*. Relations with nearby Indian communities were strained. The "broker" role of the Métis as interpreters, scouts, teachers and constables was resented by the Willow Cree of One Arrow's (Kapeyakwaskonam) and Beardy's (Kamiyistowesit) reserves.[27] The Métis of Batoche, whose Native ancestry was far removed, often stated: "on n'est pas des sauvages."[28] This statement, however, should also be interpreted as a reaction to the predominant nineteenth century racist view of the "ignoble savage." The Canadien heritage was also a liability. Many English-speaking writers of the period perceived the Métis as the product of two inferior civilizations. The mixing of French and Natives produced "a most vicious type of half-breed" and "...when one parent is French ... the traits and characteristics of the red man prevail in them."[29]

The Métis resisted these attitudes, stereotypes and "imposed" changes. Nowhere was this more evident than in their reaction to government policies regarding land claims and in defense of their "aboriginal rights" as a Native people of the North-West. With respect to land, they invoked the principles of Native parentage and early occupancy, which began around 1810 at Red River.[30] Occupancy, which meant wintering on their river lot farms in the early years, was extended when cultivation increased in the 1850s. The Métis tradition of landholding included river lots an average of six to twelve chains wide and up to two miles deep, hay reserves, wood lots and *communes*. These customs as well as the Métis informal approach to individual land ownership and exchanges were scorned by officials, in this case the Hudson's Bay Company. The Métis and Canadiens who took up lands "according to custom," without a written contract or registration were labelled as "squatters." There is evidence that these early settlers mistrusted the Company and informed officials of their land transactions only when it was necessary to establish a claim for a loan or probate a will. The *galimathias* reported by Abbé Belcourt in 1842[31] was the result of both inadequate Company surveys and administration and Métis determination to maintain the status quo. When the Hudson's Bay Company negotiated the sale of its lands or Rupert's Land, held by virtue of its charter of 1670, to the Canadian government in 1869, both parties showed little concern for Métis land claims. The Métis resisted and negotiated the terms of the Manitoba Act which formally recognized their Native land rights. But a succession of amendments to Sections 31 and 32 of the Manitoba Act in the 1870s altered the spirit and terms of the legislation, ultimately dispossessing the Métis or isolating them from the land economy.[32] In response to this situation, many Métis moved to other ancestral lands in the North-West Territories, an area still largely unexplored by white Canadians. Wiser for their experience, they were determined to regroup and resist further encroachment.

The Métis who relocated permanently in the South Saskatchewan River district in the 1870s, hastened to erect buildings and fences on their lands. In 1875, they began sending petitions to the government with respect to their right to use their lands in accordance with established custom. In the fall of 1878, a preliminary river lot survey of a block of about twenty kilometres along the banks of the South Saskatchewan River, known as the St. Laurent Settlement, was conducted by Messrs. Aldous and Reid, Dominion Land Surveyors. The two English-speaking surveyors saw few inhabitants, could not converse with them, and concluded there was no need to extend the river lot system. They adopted the rectangular survey on the west bank of the river and in the rest of the district. Out of ignorance or as a matter of strict policy, they interpreted the absence of many inhabitants as proof of nonresidence. Nonetheless, according to declarations in the Homestead and Lands Branch files, there were Métis along both banks of the river outside the St. Laurent Survey by 1878.[33] The Métis made repeated requests for resurveys between 1878 and 1885. Government response, in the person of William Pearce and other officials who had little understanding or appreciation of Métis mentality or land tenure, stated that they could enter their lands in legal subdivisions, an adaptation to the river lot system.[34] A deadlock followed, with the government refusing to conduct resurveys into river lots and the Métis generally refusing to comply, out of fear, suspicion and conviction that this was their right. Even after the resort to arms in 1885, Superintendent Pearce continued to justify government policy regarding the survey and registration of Métis lands, declaring that there was a conspiracy on their part to circumvent authority.[35]

The Métis also believed that, because of their aboriginal rights, they should not be obliged to comply with the same requirement as an immigrant or homesteader. The government avoided the request for a free land grant. With respect to scrip,[36] it stated on the eve of the armed resistance, that it would only *consider* the claims of the "western" Métis and those who had not participated in the Manitoba Scrip Grant. The issue of land under the Dominion Lands Act and scrip allotments in 1885 and in 1899 were a source of confusion and anger to the Métis of the district. Both systems were either imposed or they were enacted to facilitate white settlement. With respect to the 1885 scrip, most of the eligible Métis around Batoche cashed their certificates and did not apply them to land locations. Post-war economic circumstances were the deciding factor. According to Father Fourmond at St. Laurent "...ces scrips presque tous aussitôt vendus, ont soulagé bien des misères sans enrichir personne, si ce n'est peut-être les acheteurs."[37] In 1890, D.H. Macdowall, the Conservative Member of Parliament for the district, admitted that it had been disadvantageous for the Métis to opt for land scrip as an acre of land cost at least two dollars per acre; in other words, the recipient of scrip could purchase only 120 acres, not 240, and it had to be located immediately.

Furthermore, most of the Métis were already settled on lands for which they could obtain homestead patent. The 1899 issue of scrip to the children born between 1870 and 1885 came up after numerous petitions and debates over the question of land reserves versus scrip without restrictions. This grant was much more comprehensive in its distribution, but while money scrip was transferable, land scrip was not, encouraging the selection of the former.

A tabulation of claims for the Batoche area suggests that most eligible claimants came forward. Although money scrip was preferred, a significant number of land certificates were distributed.[38] The identity of those who chose land scrip suggests a link between socio-economic circumstances and the selection of land scrip. For example, Pantaléon Schmidt, son of Land Agent Louis Schmidt, chose land scrip, as did Baptiste Jr. and Tobie, sons of storekeeper Baptiste Boyer. Jean Letendre, son of Xavier, and his cousins Louis, Modeste Parenteau, and Victor Thomas also opted for land certificates. Although most of these scrips were later sold to real estate agents and merchants, there is evidence that some Métis profited from their investment and used the money to establish themselves at a more suitable location, or to improve their farms. There is no doubt however, that A.J. Adamson of Rosthern and H. Mitchell of Duck Lake profited more from the issue of the scrip. Métis MLA Charles Fisher raised the question of the moral responsibility of the government for misrepresentation and unregulated distribution:

> The Halfbreeds are being prevailed upon by agents or speculators to sell their own interest and that of their families' scrip for a mere song; 240 acre scrips are being bought up for the paltry sum of $75 to $80., which is not only robbing the Halfbreeds but is also a serious prospective blow to the district, as it affects the well-being of these people... I really trust the Government will see their way to protecting in some measure these poor misguided people from the hands of money sharks.[39]

With respect to Métis land entries under the Homestead Act, some developments deserve particular mention. In 1889, the lands along the river in Townships 42, 43, 44 and 45 were resurveyed into river lots. These lots were not all occupied, especially those south of Batoche. However, the resurvey encouraged many sons of families who were already settled there to take up vacant lands. After the resurveys, the Métis were more favourably inclined to make formal land entries. An analysis of 253 homestead declarations in 1884 and from 1885 to 1925[40] revealed that, contrary to what has generally been maintained, the Métis wanted their lands. The individuals who made entry persisted, although the interval between entry and patent generally exceeded the three-year term stipulated in the Dominion Lands Act. Similarly, the Métis usually occupied their claim "unofficially" for some years before making entry. In the area investigated (St. Louis, St. Laurent, Batoche and Vandal), there were no important differences between Métis and non-Métis in terms of age at time of entry, absenteeism, improvements and persistence, at least until the post-1910 period. Certain other important trends were gleaned from the statistical analysis. Once the Métis resolved to make "official" entry, they persisted until patent. The interval between the two dates was indicative of their plans for the land. More specifically, a projected sale or advanced age often hastened the process. Some, such as the suspicious Moïse Ouellette (Lots 11, 12, 13 at St. Laurent), applied for patent for Lot 13 at death's door, in 1911, the same year as official entry *but* thirty-eight years after establishing "unofficial" residence.[41]

The Métis of the district faced some particular problems when applying for patent. Their river lots almost always exceeded the 160 acre grant. From a sample of 118 cases out of 253, where lot sizes were recorded, only 25 or 21.2 percent were the standard 160 acres. According to homestead regulations, a settler had to pay for any land in excess. The government's unwritten policy during the 1890s and early 1900s, was to apply pressure on the occupants of river lots to buy these parcels. In the meantime, title to the 160-acre homestead was withheld. According to accounts in government files,[42] most of the Métis did not want to break up their claims and undertook to purchase any land in excess of 160 acres. When they were unable to pay and interest accumulated, they were threatened with losing their land. Only in special cases of extreme poverty or early settlement would the Department consider granting patent, and then for the 160 acres only. The case of Jean Caron Sr. is a good example. When he applied for patent to Lot 52 in 1888, he was informed that he must first purchase the excess twenty-three acres at three dollars per acre. However, Caron, who had settled in 1881, should only have had to pay two dollars per acre. Confused and somewhat shocked, he put the matter aside. Meanwhile, he received no further notice from the Department. Finally in 1903, when Caron was seventy years old and it became obvious he could not or would not pay, he was granted title to the westerly 160 acres of Lot 52.[43]

Other than the maze of inflexible government regulations, which all settlers, Métis and non-Métis, had to face, there was the specific problem of conflicting ideologies. The Métis practice of moving from one unoccupied lot to another or not cultivating it angered land agents. It is also evident that the Métis' long standing resentment against the government and their conviction of the precedence of their customs over the Dominion Lands Act made them conceal information or delay in complying with regulations.

Nevertheless, a number of eligible farmers took up second homesteads and attempted to make a living from mixed farming under generally unfavourable conditions around the turn of the century. Some were forced to take out seed grain advances, thus mortgaging their farms. Interest on these loans accrued and many still had 1886 bonds registered against their lands in the 1920s. Daniel Gariépy and Elie Dumont lost their lands through these liens, and the descendants of Pierre Parenteau Sr. and Baptiste Gervais only managed to obtain title to their properties in 1926 and 1930 respectively.[44]

The Métis had originally chosen their land for hay and wood lots as well as proximity to water, and not for cultivation purposes. There were good agricultural lands at St. Louis and Batoche, but the importance of proximity to family and community discouraged many from settling in adjoining townships, at least initially. The lands on the west side of the river at

Batoche, for example, were sandy and rocky. Nevertheless, many sons of older settlers tried in vain to farm them in the early 1900s. In a series of petitions after 1885, the Métis had asked for assistance in the form of implements, cattle and monetary aid, but it was refused on the basis that they held no special status.

A survey of the Homestead declarations, however, revealed that 63 percent of the Métis on lands between 1886 and 1925 were farming as a primary occupation.[45] The 1890s were good crop years although low prices and few regional markets limited profits. The early 1900s were years of consolidation and new directions. The Métis who wished to farm, or managed to make a living, remained on their lands, purchased additional land and cattle and supplemented their small incomes with a variety of labouring jobs. A comparison of acres under cultivation for Métis and non-Métis between 1898 and 1915 demonstrates that 60 percent of the Métis and 52 percent of the non-Métis cropped sixteen to thirty acres while 19 percent of the Métis and 38 percent of the non-Métis cropped thirty-one to forty-five acres.[46] The margin between the two groups only began to increase significantly after 1915. These figures illustrate the similar cultivation practices and successes of both Métis and non-Métis during this early phase of agricultural activity in western Canada. A resident of Duck Lake at the turn of the century summed up the prospects of both groups in the following words:

> Not much value was attached to land in terms of farming value, by both Métis and whites. Twenty-five acres was a big farm. There was wheat, oats and a little barley. But all we could do with it, was to take it to the mill and grind what we needed. The rest we fed to the chickens. The Métis, they preferred other things, a few cattle, a few furs. But they were successful with ponies. Farming: too big a gamble.[47]

Conclusion

The developments at Batoche after 1885 contradict the long-held view that the Métis left *en masse* after the insurrection or that their society and economy rapidly disintegrated. The period 1885 to 1925 was one of both continued resistance and persistent adaptation to change. For example, the arrival of larger numbers of immigrants after the late 1890s resulted in the consolidation of the settlement as well as the relocation of some families. With respect to economic change, the decrease in fur trading activity, freighting and other traditional activities, resulted in diversification and adaptation to new market conditions and adherence to the old ways. It must be noted, however, that the Métis had little or no influence on Canadian economic policy and developments during these years. They were not represented in banking and real estate circles and one of their few sources of influence — legislation and political patronage — eroded after 1910. They were also faced with rapid directed change and were required to adapt too quickly to an agricultural economy for which they had no particular inclination or assistance. Cultural heritage and *mentalité* also came into play. As a Native and minority group, the Métis encountered particular tensions and the prejudice of an increasing Euro-Canadian majority. Inevitably, there were some internal conflicts in the community.

The generally conservative and integrationist outlook of the wealthier merchant group was at odds with the more militant and nationalistic stand of the *rouges* who persisted in their opposition to assimilationist government policies. Conflicting ideologies regarding land and settlement were at the root of the tension and resentment between Euro-Canadians and Métis. Without the support of the Canadian public and private institutions, the Métis were unable to confirm their own practice of landholding in western Canada.

Finally, perhaps because of their proximity and prolonged interaction, the Oblate missionaries and the Métis had a comparatively more "balanced" or accommodating relationship. The objectives of the clergy can be interpreted as assimilationist and the armed resistance of 1885 undeniably caused a profound division between the two groups. But, in the end, the human factor prevailed. The genuine affection and dedication of Father Moulin won him the respect and acceptance of the Métis. "Père Caribou" was unflinching with respect to Catholic dogma and he did not hesitate to walk twenty miles on snowshoes to visit a dying parishioner. He spoke *métchif*, he made *piquette*, he prepared moosehides and he preferred life on the trail to the comforts of his rectory.

Many questions remain unanswered. More studies of Métis communities are needed to provide a comparative analysis and suggest other trends. Nicole St-Onge wrote with respect to the Métis community of Pointe-à-Grouette (Ste. Agathe, Manitoba) that the transitional period (1870-1880s) "witnessed Métis attempts to react to a precarious subsistence base by resource diversification and militant economic and political demands."[48] In many respects, this model applies to Batoche, whereas the degree of integration to the parent French Canadian society was not clearly a reflection of social class or occupation. But then, contrary to Batoche, Pointe-à-Grouette did not remain a Métis community into the twentieth century. The Native component of Métis history also needs more consideration. Inquiry into the influence of Cree and Saulteaux traditions on Métis behaviour and lifestyle, for example, would provide additional insight into Métis society and economy. These questions, among others, present a challenge to present and future researchers.

NOTES

1 Métif is the old French pronunciation used by the Métis. The missionaries also use this form in their correspondence. See also the article by Guillaume Charette, "Les Métis," *Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface* 40, no. 3 (1944): 174-87, and letter of Martin Jérôme to Maxime Goulet, 15 February 1928. Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface.

2 The term is used extensively by Fathers Moulin, André and Lacombe when referring to the Métis. See for example the letter of Father Julien Moulin to Bishop Taché, St. Laurent, 18 January 1878, Archives de l'Archevêché de Saint-Boniface (hereafter AASB).

3 The history of this national consciousness is traced in a letter of Martin Jérôme to Maxime Goulet, 15 February 1928, Archives de la Société historique de Saint-Boniface.

4 Robert Painchaud, "The Catholic Church and the Movement of Francophones to the Canadian Prairies, 1870–1915" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1976), 136 and 165.

5 Nicole J.M. St-Onge, "Métis and Merchant Capital in Red River; The Decline of Pointe-à-Grouette, 1860–85" (M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1983), 37.

6 Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Richard Hardisty Papers, Census of Métis of St. Laurent near Fort Carlton District in 1871.

7 Archives Deschâtelets, Père A. André, "Mémorial en réponse au questionnaire du R.P. Visiteur, 1883," 119–30.

8 Evêché de Prince-Albert, Rapports spirituels et financiers, Paroisse de Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue, Batoche.

9 In the 1890s and early 1900s, both traders were selling furs at national and international fur auctions. Venne's furs sold for $1,700.00 at the Winnipeg auction in 1889 while Letendre's sold for $3,400.00. Saskatchewan Archives Board (hereafter SAB), H. Mitchell Papers, F. Stobart to H. Mitchell, 29 May 1889.

10 Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B. 276/611, p. 126, H. Adams to G.S. Davison, 15 July 1891.

11 Interview with Mme Justine (Caron) St-Germain, Batoche, 1981.

12 Ibid.

13 An example was the Caron-Parenteau-St-Germain and Pilon families of Batoche.

14 Interview with M. Elie Dumont, Duck Lake, 1982.

15 Interview with Mme Alexandrine (Fleury) Nicolas, Duck Lake, 1981.

16 *Prince Albert Times and Saskatchewan Review*, 3 January 1890.

17 Interview with S. Irène Schmidt, Prince Albert, 1976.

18 Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter PAM), MG 9, A31, Mémoires de Louis Schmidt, Addenda, p. 2.

19 Interview with Mme Justine (Caron) St-Germain, Batoche, 1981.

20 Interview with Mme Nicolas, Duck Lake, 1982.

21 Ibid.

22 In 1911, the Union Nationale Métisse de St. Joseph de Manitoba, integrated the Union Jack in the upper left corner of its original flag which displayed three golden *fleurs de lis* on a white ground. PAM, MG 3, B 21. The "François Marion flag" in the Fort Battleford National Historic Park collection exhibits the two symbols.

23 Interview with Mme Lumina Gaudet, Batoche, 1976.

24 Interview with M. Elie Dumont, Duck Lake, 1982.

25 Interview with M. Joseph Jobin, Wakaw, 1976. He was referring specifically to the Mennonites.

26 The words of Jean Letendre as reported in a scenario recounted by Mme Justine (Caron) St-Germain, Batoche, 1981.

27 Provincial Archives of Alberta (hereafter PAA), OMI Collection, "Petite Chronique de Saint Laurent," 1888. The Almighty Voice incident is another example of this tension and sensitive intermediary role between whites and Natives.

28 This assertion was made on many occasions. See, for example, Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Richard Hardisty Papers, file 31, letter 143, Condensed Report of a meeting of Métis Winterers at St. Laurent, 31 December 1871.

29 George E. Ellis, *The Red Man and the White Man in North America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1882), 626. Captain Butler and the Earl of Southesk also used similar rhetoric.

30 AASB, Fonds Provencher, "Soumission des habitants de la Rivière Rouge pour un missionnaire, 1817."

31 AASB, Fonds Provencher, G.A. Belcourt à C.F. Cazeau, 4 août 1842.

32 D.N. Sprague, "The Manitoba Land Question, 1870-1882," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15, no. 3 (1980): 74-84.

33 SAB, Canada, Department of the Interior, Homestead file 81184.

34 University of Alberta Archives, W. Pearce Papers, Vol. II, Pearce to Dominion Lands Commissioner, Winnipeg, 31 October 1884. The government proposed a plan to adopt a section of 640 acres divided into four quarters of 160 acres each to the river lot system. Each quarter section was divided into eight parcels, thirty-two per section. The settler could claim the required parcels in a river lot pattern. In principle, this was possible, but it was often difficult to incorporate all fields or improvements and, more seriously, the Métis were suspicious of the reliability of such a procedure.

35 Detailed Report upon all claims to Land and right to participate in the North-West Half-Breed Grant by Settlers along the South Saskatchewan and vicinity... (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1886), 1-17. Glenbow-Alberta Institute, George B. Coutts Papers, Typescript, 1923. W. Pearce to Chairman of Alberta Military Institute, No. 13, 16 October 1923.

36 Scrip was a ticket worth $160 or $240; it was redeemable in land, issued by the federal government. It was granted to the Métis of Manitoba and later to those of the North-West Territories, between 1876 and 1901, as a means of extinguishing their aboriginal claims. Conditions of the complex and confusing system varied over the years; at the outset in 1871, scrip could only be exchanged for land in the name of and for the bearer. It was initially granted only to the children of heads of families, but money scrip was issued to the

heads of families and as part of a Supplementary Issue. Between 1873 and 1885, the system of scrip was gradually altered, facilitating its disposition to speculators rather than the Métis. The 1899–1900 issue in the North–West was redeemable in land or money.

37 PAA, OMI, "Petite Chronique de Saint Laurent," 1886.

38 Certificates for 240-acre land scrip issued to the Métis of Batoche and surrounding communities in 1900, including subsequent date of assignment or sale, Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC) RG 15, 8 (c) (e) and Appendix G in Diane Payment, "Les Gens Libres," in *Batoche, Saskatchewan 1870–1930: Histoire d'une communauté métisse/History of a Métis Community* (Parks Canada Manuscript, 1984).

39 PAC, MG 26, G, Vol. 118, C. Fisher to W. Laurier, 14 July 1899.

40 Payment, "Les Gens Libres," Appendix F, 276–77 and discussion in Chapter V.

41 SAB, Canada, Department of Agriculture, Lands Branch files, river lots 11–14, St. Laurent Settlement; Canada, Department of the Interior, Homestead file 2 578 579.

42 SAB, Ibid., Homestead files 4 049 585, 3 333 836, 2 850 058, 781 078, 2 492 466 and Department of Agriculture, Lands Branch files, river lots 16, 28, 34, 39 and 41 at St-Laurent.

43 SAB, Homestead file 6 451 77.

44 SAB, Homestead file 81184 and Lands Branch files regarding sections 7 and 8, T43-1-3.

45 Payment, "Les Gens Libres," 177.

46 Ibid., Table IV, 186.

47 Interview with Mr. Fred Anderson, Duck Lake, 1976.

48 St-Onge, "Métis and Merchant Capital in Red River," 59.

The North–West Rebellion Scrip Commissions, 1885–1889

Ken Hatt

Following the annexation of Manitoba and the North–West, the lands held by Native people were appropriated either through treaty or scrip — two distinct mechanisms for extinguishing claims. Where treaty agree-

Figure 1 North-West Métis Scrip Commissions

COMMISSION	DATES	ORDER-in-COUNCIL	DATE	FINAL REPORT	PAC/RG FILE/VOL.	COMMIS-SIONER(S)
Rebellion Commissions						
1885-Northwest	10 April 1885 - 28 August 1885	688	20 March 1885	15 October 1885	175917/574	Street, Goulet, Forget
1886-Northwest	21 May 1886 - 17 November 1886	309	1 March 1886	12 January 1887	140862/501	Goulet
1887-Northwest	7 June 1887- 1 December 1887	898	9 May 1887	10 January 1888	140862/501	Goulet, N.O. Coté
1889-Green Lake	13 February 1889 - 27 March 1889	2675	14 December 1888	1 May 1889	140862/501	Goulet
Post Manitoba Commissions						
1887-Dakota Treaty	March 1887 - March 1887	778	28 April 1886	2 April 1886	HB4232/194	Goulet
1887-Northern Manitoba	26 January 1887 - 28 February 1887	1075	21 May 1887	27 March 1887	140862/501	Goulet
Treaty 8 Commission						
1889-Treaty 8	23 June 1899 - 30 September 1899*	918	6 May 1899	30 September 1899	504454/760	Walker, J.A. Coté
					518158/771 555680/782	McRae, Conroy
Northwest Commissions						
1900-Alberta/ Athabasca	16 May 1900 - 6 December 1900	438	2 March 1900	11 March 1901	556321/783	McKenna, Walker
1900-Assiniboia/ Saskatchewan	15 May 1900 - 11 December 1900	438	1 March 1900	29 March 1901	556321/783	J.A. Coté, McLeod
1901-Northwest	5 June 1901 - 19 December 1901	575	16 March 1901	31 May 1901	616753/825	McKenna
Treaties 10 & 5 Commission						
1906-Treaties 10/5	6 September 1906 - 26 September 1906	1459	20 July 1906	15 March 1907	1247280/991	McKenna, Borthwick
					1578625/1016	J. Semmons
Treaty 11 Commission						
1921-Treaty 11		1172	12 April 1921			Conroy

*Additional trips were made to take applications ments had been signed, orders-in-council based on the Manitoba Act or the Dominion Lands Act authorized the undertaking of Scrip Commissions to extinguish the claims of the Métis.[1] Kemp, Sprague, and Taylor have examined the activities which occurred in Manitoba, but there has been only sparse research regarding the later Scrip Commissions.[2] This is due in part to the provincial focus on land claims research by Métis associations which were a response to the federal land claims initiatives. It may also be due to the difficulties in consolidating the disparate set of documents found in the Department of the Interior records in the Public Archives of Canada. Figure 1 outlines the basic information on all Scrip Commissions undertaken to deal with Métis in the North-West Territories from 1885 to 1921.

The following criteria are used to define a Scrip Commission: (1) the existence of a treaty and Métis claims in a circumscribed area, (2) the statutory and administrative basis for the activity — which would include the Dominion Lands Act and order-in-council, (3) provision for decisions regarding eligibility and the form of allotment to be made (for example, residence, family status, and date of birth), and (4) specified persons authorized to conduct the investigations and appear at specified places and dates.

Table 1 Claims and Allotments in the North-West Rebellion Scrip Commissions

Commission	Claims Preferred	Allowed	Money Scrip	Land
1885	1815	1678	279,000	55,260
1886	1414	1164	261,689	2,640
1887	565	405	81,804	3,120
1889	56	52	18,367	—
	3850	3299	640,860	61,020

From Table 1 it can be seen that I have divided the Scrip Commissions into several groupings. The first of these occurred in response to the North-West Rebellion and are the subject of this paper. In addition, there were two post-Manitoba Scrip Commissions, one to Pembina in the United States, and one to deal with northern Manitoba. Scrip Commissions were undertaken in conjunction with Treaties Five, Eight, Ten and Eleven. Finally, a series of Scrip Commissions covering Saskatchewan and Alberta occurred in early 1900 and 1901.

The recent polemic by Flanagan on the North-West Rebellion included a discussion of the Scrip Commission of 1885.[3] He refers to it in addressing the question of whether or not the Métis were justified in taking up arms against the government. More specifically, Flanagan examines how the passing of an order-in-council authorizing the 1885 Commission may have contributed to or resolved any grounds for the Métis action. My point of departure is quite the reverse in several senses.[4] I am interested in the manner in which the Commissions can help understand the role of government activities in the process of appropriation of Native land and livelihood.

Panitch notes that the functions of the state in Canada include assisting in the accumulation of wealth; legitimation by enhancement of social harmony; and the use of coercion where threats to order occur.[5] I find it helpful to take this notion of the functions of the state as a point of reference for examining activities like the Scrip Commissions. More particularly, I think it is possible to show Scrip Commissions as efforts which primarily involve legitimation, but which do not seriously compromise the other functions as well. I am suggesting that these Commissions, which occurred at the time of the North-West Rebellion, are a special example of legitimizing a coercive undertaking within the context of capital accumulation. Hence the National Policy of Sir John A. Macdonald and the creation of treaties and Scrip Commissions are seen as efforts primarily in legitimization, enhancing social harmony. The Department of the Interior and the Department of Indian Affairs which emerged from the former in this period are the organizational arrangements for accomplishing that end.

Working from within the Departmental documents, my aim is to identify problematic features in this enterprise. From the Scrip Commission documents I have identified topics in correspondence which represent difficulties experienced by the Commissioners and the Department of the Interior. It is my view that these problematic situations can give insight into the contradictory demands placed on the Department if we view them in relation to the alternative positions considered, and the Departmental policy which resulted.

To the extent that files have not been stripped, and reflect actual problems, I expect that it will be possible to see how the Department achieved the task of legitimization in a coercive undertaking within the context of capital accumulation.

After outlining the basic features of the North-West Rebellion Scrip Commissions, their itineraries and legislative basis, I will discuss in turn the major problematic topics in the files of the Scrip Commissions.

The North-West Rebellion Scrip Commissions

It is clear that the 1885 Commission and its successors arose directly from the action taken at Duck Lake. As a result of several years of complaints and evidence that the Métis and Indians were mobilizing forces, the government decided on 28 January 1885 to establish an enumeration of Métis in the North-West. The conditional nature of the recognition and how it changed are worth noting. The 28 January order-in-council established only an enumeration of Métis in the North-West, "who would have been entitled to land had they resided in Manitoba at the time of transfer and filed their claims in due course under the Manitoba Act,..."[6]

In this order there was no commitment to extinguish the claims of the Métis. The aim of the enumeration was to establish a list of Métis relative to the Manitoba Act, not the Dominion Lands Act, which was the operative piece of legislation for extinguishing Métis claims in the North-West. The Dominion Lands Act had been in place since 1879 and had been amended to apply to Métis in the North-West.[7]

Flanagan has argued that the order-in-council of 28 January was a conciliatory gesture on the part of Sir John A. Macdonald and the beginning of a policy.[8] Such an interpretation is clearly specious since the

Dominion Lands Act, not the Manitoba Act, would properly be the cornerstone of any policy. The order-in-council of 30 March, four days after Crozier's defeat at Duck Lake, was based on the latter.[9] The contrast with the former document is clear. In the 30 March order-in-council, W.P.R. Street of London, Ontario, was named Chairman of the Commission. Roger Goulet, a Métis from St. Boniface, and Amédée E. Forget were the other members. The Commissioners were given power to extinguish the claims of Métis residing in the North-West on 15 July 1870, in areas which had already been ceded by treaty. Allotments were to be in money scrip worth 160 acres for Métis heads of households and worth 240 acres for children of Métis heads of households.

Flanagan also states that the order-in-council of 30 March was never amended and that the distribution of lands based on it may have been of dubious legality.[10] Both assertions are false, as can be seen by consulting the correspondence and the order-in-council of 18 April 1885, which he does not mention.[11]

Further evidence of the hasty response of the government is seen from the fact that Street was officially appointed on 30 March, arrived in Winnipeg on 5 April, and left on Commission business two days later.[12] Figure 1 shows the itineraries of the various Scrip Commissions between 1885 and 1889.

Leaving from Winnipeg, the 1885 Commission travelled to Regina via Fort Qu'Appelle, crossing to Calgary and up to Edmonton with numerous stops along the way. Due to the "unsettled nature of the area," Lac La Biche was passed by and the Commission went down the North Saskatchewan River to Prince Albert.[13] From there the journey continued downstream to Cumberland House, through Grand Rapids to Lake Winnipeg and Winnipeg. Numerous stops were made along the way. Arriving in Winnipeg in mid-August, Goulet returned to southern Saskatchewan to complete unfilled applications in Willow Bunch, Moose Jaw, and Regina.

Goulet was unable to reach the Lac La Biche area in 1885. Owing to the large number of claims remaining in the Métis population, Goulet was appointed to make another circuit in 1886.[14] Leaving Winnipeg on 31 May he held sittings in Swift Current, Maple Creek, Calgary, and Edmonton with several stops between the latter two communities. On this journey he was able to get to Lac La Biche, and he then travelled through Battleford to Prince Albert, St. Laurent, Fort Qu'Appelle and Fort Ellice, arriving at Winnipeg on 17 November 1886.[15] Because the winter was so far advanced, he was unable to make the trip from Prince Albert to Cumberland House and around through the Lake Winnipeg area. As a result, a third Scrip Commission was authorized and he left Winnipeg on 7 June returning in later September of 1887. Goulet immediately returned to the Green Lake area, travelling back through Fort Qu'Appelle, Batoche, and Carlton, returning to Winnipeg on 26 November.[16]

Following the signing of an adhesion to Treaty Six in the Green Lake area in late 1888, Goulet returned in February 1889. There he dealt with scrip applications at Montreal Lake, Red Deer Lake, Prince Albert, Stony Lake, Green Lake and Shell River before returning to Winnipeg.[17]

In these four journeys over 3,800 claims had been preferred for scrip and nearly 3,300 were allowed. Over $640,000 in money scrip and 60,000 acres of land scrip were allotted in the process. Table 1 presents this information in detail.[18]

The Legislative Basis for the Commission

In contrast to the Manitoba Act, which specifically set aside lands for Métis in Manitoba, the Dominion Lands Act served as the basis for the North-West Scrip Commissions. Through the latter, the Governor-in-Council was given the power:

> To satisfy any claims existing in connection with the extinguishment of the Indian title, preferred by [Métis] resident in the North-West Territories outside the limits of Manitoba, previous to the fifteenth day of July, one thousand eight hundred and seventy, by granting land to such persons, to such extent and on such terms and conditions as may be deemed expedient.[19]

This also meant, however, that Métis claims were dealt with within the framework established for settlers and homesteaders. Hence, the regulations relating to the location of land and the procedures for acquiring title were imposed on the existing land usage of the Métis — a clear indication of the importance of the function of accumulation.

Originally passed in 1879, the Dominion Lands Act had specified that claims would be extinguished for Métis who were resident in the North-West *on* 15 July 1870. In 1883, this was revised to the wording presented above specifying that Métis were eligible on the grounds of residing there *previous to* 15 July 1870.[20] Such a change represented a recognition by the government that the Métis claim to land derived from their participation in Indian title, and that that title was extinguished as part of the transfer of land from the Hudson's Bay Company.

In addition, each Scrip Commission was based on an order-in-council which established the Commissioner, the rules of eligibility, and the types and nature of allotment. The relevant information for each of the Scrip Commissions in the North-West is found in Table 1.

Flanagan argues that recognition of Métis claims was a mistake and that the concept of land is little more than a mystical notion.[21] It is difficult to know the grounds upon which Flanagan can argue that, historically speaking, such a decision was a mistake. His own analytical framework and set of presuppositions are unclear and the justification cannot be evaluated. It is possible, however, to respond to his view that the strong interest in land has a mystical character. A major premise in his argument rests on the peculiar interpretation he gives to the fact that Métis overwhelmingly preferred money scrip which they could sell easily, to land scrip which was more difficult to transfer. I address his faulty interpretation on that matter later in this paper. It is sufficient here to point out that there are grounds for understanding land as the vehicle through which the protest of the Métis has been expressed and co-opted. That is, the legitimation function involved subsuming original Métis views of land within a new framework, transforming them into an administrative as well as a symbolic representation.

There is evidence that the Métis (primarily the French-speaking Métis) of the Red River settlement conceived of themselves as a nation, holding an identity in which land was an inherent feature. Banks examined many of the contemporary sources dealing with just this question.[22] He considered the nature of the Métis people and their concept of nationhood by explicating the discourse employed throughout the establishment of the provisional government. In that regard he drew the following conclusion:

> Specifically I consider the New Nation, from the perspective of the Métis, as defined by a government, popularly supported by its [Métis] members, and whose jurisdiction extended over all the people of the territories. The national rights claimed by the members of the New Nation were thus not collective title to land of the Northwest, for this they were able to do from their very mythical moment of creation. Rather the [Métis] People had developed into a nation, and its national rights proper were those of government of the people resident in the territories.... However, the historical practices in which the concept of the New Nation had developed — in particular the buffalo hunt — were dominated by the Métis alone and, as such it was only they alone ... who considered themselves as members of the New Nation.[23]

Although there was a conception of land involving an inherent relationship with the people, this was soon transformed as can be seen in the Manitoba Act.

It is my view that opposing conceptions of land rapidly developed in the encounters between the government and the Métis. That is, legitimation and social harmony involved establishing an interdependence of conceptions of land. The government had its own conception (later set out in the National Policy), but in order to successfully co-opt the Métis, a form of land recognition was necessary. This point was probably not lost on the Métis and their leaders.

Recognition, then, was not a mistake, as Flanagan suggests. It was a necessary gambit, no matter how clumsy to implement, in order to assure that the Métis were politically encapsulated. Such a strategy also made it possible to defend one's position in the House of Commons as did John A. Macdonald. Likewise, it transformed land into land claims which were extinguished as scrip to be sold or applied to the settlement process.

I argue that the mystical character of land in recent Native expression, to use Flanagan's terms, only represents a variation in the structure of Native/government relations which Flanagan has simply not tried to "decode." It can be observed that recent government land claims activity — with its concern for substantiation of comprehensive and specific land claims — has, itself, mystical qualities. This point is that the structure of these relations and the role that land has assumed within them need to be examined. Land claims serve to legitimize Canadian appropriation and have transformed the Métis conception into a commodity which was likely to yield accumulative benefits to settlers, speculators, and financial institutions.

The Scrip Commissions, however, faced the task of dealing with the Métis in a situation of considerable duress. It is to be expected that the Commissioners would face contradictions in their task as can be seen from their correspondence with the administrators in the Department of the Interior.

Land Claims for River Lot Frontage

The difficulties of imposing a township survey system on the Métis, who had used a river lot system, have been widely publicized.[24] In the Red River Settlement and in the North-West as well, the Métis had settled in long narrow strips of land along rivers, allowing both access to the water and adequate land for hay and other agricultural use. While promises had been made to respect and set aside lands in the North-West on this basis, the order-in-council authorizing land claims on 30 March 1885 did not recognize this fact. Upon arriving in Winnipeg on 5 April, Commissioner Street wired the Minister of the Interior, Sir David Macpherson:

> ... inasmuch as the Government has all along been purporting to deal with the [Métis] as if they had some general rights beyond those of ordinary incoming settlers, my fellow Commissioners say that great dissatisfaction and disappointment will be created if we give to these [Métis who are occupying waterfront lots] only that which any ordinary settler can claim and nothing for the extinguishment of his Indian title.[25]

In response, Macpherson suggested that Métis heads of households occupying land be given that land plus scrip to a total of 160 acres, and that they be required to purchase the land occupied at one dollar per acre, to be paid within two years. Street then replied that after a meeting with certain "influential Métis" such a proposal was not acceptable. Instead, Street proposed that the land *plus* a total of 160 acres be granted to Métis heads of households. On 18 April 1885, Order-in-Council 821 was passed providing the Métis who were in *bona fide* occupation of water frontage lots up to forty acres in size be sold those lands at one dollar per acre and be allowed to select up to 160 acres of land open for homestead.[26] Order 821 also provides that the land then being occupied would cost one dollar per acre and be subject to homestead regulations. It had to be paid for within two years and the patent for the 160 acres of land would not be issued until the payment on the occupied land was made. Such was the outcome of what Flanagan calls a "conciliatory gesture."

The Claims of the "Rebels"

In most cases, the scrip applications were accepted, yet the Commissioners were unsure how they were to deal with persons who had participated in the North-West Rebellion. On 23 May 1885, Street wrote from Calgary, asking for guidance on the matter. In conclusion he added:

> ... I am of the opinion that it will be desirable that I should not be instructed to reserve [the claims] — to do so would give the impression that the Government had decided to disallow them but shrunk from saying so.[27]

About one year later, Duck, writing for Goulet, addressed the same point:

> ... no good object can be gained from [reserving the claims] ... if the object of his Commission is final extinguishment of the

> Indian Title, he thinks that instructions might be made definite within one way or the other in regard to this matter.[28]

In both cases, the decision was to reserve judgement on the claims. The statement of June 1885 demonstrates the way in which the Department was rationalizing the commitment to coercive action with recognition of Métis claims.

> 1. The Commission must not recognize the claims of any men who have fought against the Government.
>
> 2. Nor of any men who joined the rebellion whether they actually fought or not, because it is evident from the fact that they joined the rebels their intention was to fight, and they failed to carry that intention into effect probably from lack of opportunity.
>
> 3. It of course follows that the widows and children of men killed in arms against the Government have no rights which the Commission can recognize, unless they have such rights in their own persons.
>
> 4. As to the wives (claiming in their own right) of men who have taken up arms against the Government, it will be the duty of the Commission to enquire into and recognize their claims when presented.
>
> 5. A similar decision applies to children.[29]

Burgess's answer to Street is a classic example of casuistry in relating the contradictory obligations toward coercion and legitimation:

> ... permit me to remind you that the ... Commission will not be in a position to try the question of whether or not any person or persons were actually engaged in the rebellion; that question will have to be decided by another tribunal; and pending that decision, I cannot see how the Commission can do otherwise,... than reserve them. Of course it will be the duty of the Commission, in regard to all cases where there are reasonable grounds for believing that the claimants do fall within the ... classes mentioned in your letter, to withhold their decision until all doubt on the subject is at rest.[30]

The decision to reserve judgement on the claims, then, was based on the position that Commissioners could not determine whether or not Métis applicants had actually engaged in the Rebellion. Since that decision had not been made, the Commissioners were to take the applications and reserve judgement on them. I have not been able to discover whether any final decision was ever made on the claims of persons considered rebels. The quandary faced by the Commissioners and the policy judgements of the Department seem to illustrate this relative weighting of these contradictory commitments.

Métis Withdrawing from Treaty Status

One of the major decisions faced by the Department of the Interior concerned how to deal with Métis who had taken treaty and were living on reserves as treaty Indians. Under the assimilationist policy of Macdonald and Vankoughnet, Native people living on reserves faced serious deprivation and starvation. George Stanley has described the manner in which the Native people were forced onto reserves and the privation they then experienced under Vankoughnet's fiscal constraints.[31] Related to these events was a series of efforts to promote the withdrawal from treaty of all Métis who had taken treaty and adopted the status of Indians.[32] In 1879 the Indian Act was amended to provide for Métis withdrawing from treaty status:

> And [Métis] who may have been admitted into a treaty shall be allowed to withdraw therefrom on refunding all money received by him or her under the said treaty, or suffering corresponding reduction in the quantity of any land or scrip which such [Métis] as such may be entitled to receive from the Government.[33]

This was further amended five years later so that no refunds were required.[34] There was, then, a clear commitment to encourage Métis who had status as treaty Indians to withdraw and take scrip. This can be seen from the 1885 instructions to Street, where he is advised that those who apply "be dealt with by the Government equitably and liberally."[35] There can be little doubt that these efforts were successful. After completing the first Commission, Street reported that there were many who wished to leave treaty to take scrip. Roger Goulet reported after the second Scrip Commission that 52 percent of the 1,159 certificates granted were to Métis leaving treaty to take scrip.[36] The rush to leave treaty status — in part a result of the deprivation experienced — led to concern and alarm on the part of the public and the Commissioners. Goulet wrote to Burgess:

> I have consulted a great many prominent persons of this part of the country relative to this question and they all agree that once those Treaty [Métis are] allowed to leave the Reserves on which they are now fed by the Government they would become a burden to the community and would no doubt eventually be a cause of great annoyance to the Government, but on the other hand they fear, to some extent that refusing them what they so earnestly ask for — their discharges and their scrip might make them very disenchanted.[37]

This led to the decision that Métis who "lead the same mode of life as Indians are not to be granted discharges from Treaty."[38] Goulet continued to exercise discretion in allowing or refusing Métis to withdraw from treaty throughout the remaining Scrip Commissions.

Scrip for Métis who were not the Children of Métis

It will be recalled that scrip was granted either to a Métis who was a head of a household, or to a Métis who was the child of a Métis head of household residing in the North-West before 15 July 1870. As the Commissions began to deal with Métis withdrawing from treaty, they found a number of persons who were Métis, but of "mixed blood," that is, they were "of pure Indian and white parents."

On 20 May 1885, Street wrote Burgess regarding this matter. He was concerned about the obvious discrepancy that a person of mixed blood should be excluded: "they are, of course, [Métis] themselves but they are not the children of [Métis]."[39] Street pointed out that such a provision was found in the Manitoba Act and that the absence from the present order-in-council was causing great excitation as well as being difficult to explain as a just measure. As a result, a new order-in-council was passed on 2 July 1885. It specified that the definition of children of (Métis) heads of families "... shall be held to include all those of mixed blood, partly white and partly Indian, and who are not heads of families."[40] In effect, then, recognition was given to an entirely new cohort of Métis, or persons who can be recognized as Métis. Hence, participation in the notion of Indian title was extended beyond those who had shared in the Hudson's Bay Company epoch, a move clearly designed to enhance social harmony.

Land Scrip and Money Scrip

There were few difficulties more contentious than the question of how scrip would be allotted. Land scrip was a certificate which could be used to locate land for actual entry. Money scrip was a certificate which could be applied to the purchase of or down payment on land to be located. In Manitoba, money scrip was preferred because of its status as personal rather than real property. It was easier to transfer ownership to speculators who bought the scrip relatively cheaply.[41]

The initial order-in-council regarding scrip allotments on 30 March 1885, specified that there would be an issue of scrip redeemable in land (money scrip). When Street arrived in Winnipeg, he had a meeting with clergy and some Métis leaders. On 9 April he wired Macpherson that

> All children will refuse money scrip, demanding certificate for two-forty acres land instead, like Manitoba. Several bishops and priests supported this demand.[42]

This led to an order-in-council on 18 April 1885, providing that children of Métis would be granted a certificate entitling them to select 240 acres of land instead of an issue of $240 in scrip.[43] It became clear soon after that the great majority of Métis children would not be taking land scrip, but would prefer money scrip. That led to the concern about who, in fact, would actually locate the land for these children, many of whom were infants. It was finally clarified by ruling that the legally constituted guardian would be the person to undertake that selection. Such questions were of minor importance, though, because the vast majority of Métis — children and heads of households — preferred money scrip to land scrip. It can be seen from Table 1 that over 90 percent of the total value of scrip was taken in money, assuming land scrip to be worth one dollar an acre. The heavy demand for money scrip saved the department some complications. When the original order-in-council specifying money scrip was amended, it specified that land scrip would be given instead of money scrip. It turned out that such a wording would rule out money scrip as an allotment. This was discovered and changed in April 1886. At that time, either the money or the land scrip was made a permissible allotment for children.[44]

In what might be called a "tribute to the speculator," Flanagan presents an interpretation of the sale of scrip which is misleading at best.[45] Flanagan would have us believe that the sale of scrip was identical to the sale of products in the small markets of rural villages. He suggests that there were buyers who were small operators; who were forced to compete heavily; offer higher prices; and create good market prices for Métis. He suggests that the Métis as sellers were constrained only minimally and were thus rational sellers as was typical of the entrepreneurial images we have of them in their Red River days. Letting the marketplace decide the fortunes of the Métis was an acceptable solution for Flanagan as it was for the leading actors in this arrangement — the speculators. It is his tone as well as his words which are important in this interpretation:

> Few groups in Canadian history have been as consistently maligned as those who speculated in [Métis] lands; but in my opinion, such detraction is both unfair and irrational. ...Far from being villain, the speculators were benefactors both of the [Métis], whom they provided with sizeable amounts of cash, and of potential farmers, for whom they created a market in land as an alternative to the government's requirement of homesteading.[46]

The sale of scrip did not conform to the image presented by Flanagan. In the first place, as he himself acknowledges, most of the purchasing was undertaken by large-scale economic operators. There is strong evidence that if there was competition, it was within limits set by the buyers. They would agree on a minimum price and then work within it.[47] The Métis operated from a situation of constraint which Flanagan minimizes. For a group of persons who generally were facing economic difficulties; who found getting to a land office difficult; who were living on land in which farming was often an impossibility and which contradicted their lifestyle — land scrip was far from beneficial. Flanagan disputes the argument that the Métis were gullible or vulnerable to these shrewd practices. He points to the reputation of the Métis as traders and sharp bargainers in the Red River area. His argument is misplaced. Shrewd bargainers can only operate well in situations of relatively equal power. For many of the Métis, the economic base of the Red River was gone, and they were operating in a situation of serious deprivation. Consider, for example, the high percentage of Métis taking scrip who were just coming off reserves. It may be that under all these constraints the decision to sell was a rational one — it was probably the only reasonable one. But that does not mean that the arrangement itself is in any way virtuous or worthy of Flanagan's celebration. The Métis sold their scrip because that was their only reasonable option. How can Flanagan reach such an optimistic conclusion when the very people he cites draw opposite conclusions? Flanagan cites Sir John A. Macdonald:

> The scrip is sold for a song to the sharks and spent in whiskey, and this we desire above all things to avoid.[48]

Flanagan notes that the missionaries lamented, "Almost all of our people are taking money scrips...."[49] A.M. Burgess, the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of the Interior for this period wrote in a report in 1890:

> The scrip distributed as the result of the work of the Commis-

> sion of 1885-6-7, while in many cases effective in assisting industrious and economical [Métis] to buy stock and implements, left the great majority of the recipients poorer than before.[50]

An objective evaluation of the scrip policy as a benefit to the Métis would require a conclusion quite to the contrary of that reached by Flanagan.

Flanagan's reply, of course, is that one should not assume that land was a crucial feature for the Métis — that it was a mystical notion used to rationalize other factors. As I have argued earlier, I believe there was a view in the Red River in which the land and the people were inherently related. I argue that the notion of land was important to the federal government in itself and as a means to attain social harmony in the North-West. Land was important as an inherent feature of Métis identity in the Red River and it came to be an inherent part of the conflict between Métis and the government. Even if land was part of the Métis ideology and identity, that does not make it less relevant. It is all the more important, in my view, because the government often used this notion of the land to legitimize its appropriation of Métis activities. The Métis preferred money scrip because land scrip was inappropriate and unable to fill their pressing needs.

Scrip for Métis Living Outside Areas Ceded by Treaty

In early 1887, petitions were received by the Department of the Interior to award scrip to the residents of the Green Lake area in Saskatchewan. Since existing policy precluded any such action in areas that had not been ceded by treaty, the formal response from the Department was negative. Goulet was in the vicinity of Green Lake on Scrip Commission matters. As a result, he was directed to proceed to Green Lake, where he took applications from a number of Métis. These were "reserved" for further consideration. During the following year, arrangements were being made to "get Indians quietly into Treaty."[51] By 29 November 1888, Lieutenant Colonel Irvine and Goulet were authorized to reach agreement with Indians living in the Green Lake-Montreal Lake region of Saskatchewan. Goulet discovered at Green Lake that a significant number of persons whose claims he had reserved were actually from Ile-à-la-Crosse — outside the area in this Adhesion to Treaty Six. A serious dispute ensued in the Department regarding the acceptance of these claims.[52] The implications of accepting such claims were not lost on key administrators like Burgess. Nor were they lost on some of the major speculators. The issue was resolved as shown in the order-in-council of 18 March 1889. It was decided that "... it would be advisable and in the public interest that these claims be finally disposed of, notwithstanding the residence of the claimants ... in territory which had not yet been ceded."[53] This served as a precedent and Department correspondence shows that further awards were made where the land had, in fact, not yet been ceded by treaty.

Conclusion

Following Panitch's discussion of the functions of the state, it has been suggested that the Department of the Interior was implementing the National Policy so as to increase the accumulation of capital and development in the North-West; increase social harmony and legitimize the inclusion of Métis claims within the general policy; and support the coercive effort to put down the Rebellion. In doing so, the Scrip Commissioners faced a number of problems and contradictions in pursuing what came to be conflicting objectives. I have examined the six major problematic areas in the records of the Department. While in many cases the action of the Department involved vacillation, the pattern and direction of decisions is fairly clear. The Department always acted to increase the social harmony by encouraging the recognition of Métis claims. But it did so only to the point of not contradicting the accumulation objectives in its mandate. The Métis were granted a right to purchase the river lots on which they were in *bona fide* occupation. And if the payments were not complete in two years, those lands and the lands granted through scrip would not be patented. The claims of the rebels were not to be recognized, but their applications were to be taken and "reserved." Métis withdrawing from treaty who did not live the "same mode of life as Indians" were granted scrip, a concesssion to the principle of equity, and a move which would be expected to lead to social harmony. Children of "pure Indian and white parents" who were resident before 15 July 1870, were to be granted scrip. This, too, was a concession which could be justified on the grounds of equity and social harmony. Métis living outside treaty areas were granted scrip in selected situations, again on the grounds of equity and social harmony. It should be pointed out that each of these three concessions in no way contradicted the encouragement of scrip which could be used as a basis for the development of the North-West. The vacillation between land scrip and money scrip as an allotment represents acceding to the requests of the Métis but in no way limits the notion of accumulation.

Each of the major problems faced by the Scrip Commission resulted in adjustments and decisions which were intended to increase social harmony (the legitimation function) without violating the primary commitment to distribution of scrip through which the accumulative processes were enhanced.

NOTES

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1 The term "Métis" will be used as a substitute for the common designation "Half-Breed." This is done in order to counteract the racist connotations associated with the latter. Where "Half-Breed" is used in specific quotations, I have inserted the term "Métis" in square brackets instead.

2 Douglas H. Kemp, "Land Grants under the Manitoba Act," *Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Papers*, Series 3, No. 9, 35-52; D.N. Sprague, "Government Lawlessness in the Administration of Manitoba Land Claims, 1870-1887," *Manitoba Law Journal* 10 (1980): 415-41; "The Manitoba Land Questions, 1870-1882," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (1980): 74-84; and

John L. Taylor, "Historical Introduction to Métis Claims in Canada," Indian Claims Commission, 1975, Ottawa.

3 Thomas Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983).

4 It is not my own view that the historical sociology of the Métis is not adequately addressed by focussing on whether or not they were justified in taking up arms against the government — which amounts to a loaded question (no pun intended). The experiences of indigenous peoples in contact with colonial and capitalist enterprise require a broader understanding than Flanagan seems able to muster. The narrowness of the approach makes the work closer to propaganda than social sciences and would appear to encourage racist expression.

5 Leo Panitch, "The role and nature of the Canadian state," in L. Panitch, ed., *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 8.

6 Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), RG 2, 28 January 1885, P.C. No. 135.

7 *The Historical Development of the Indian Act* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978), 77.

8 Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion*, 69–70.

9 PAC, RG 2, 30 March 1885, P.C. No. 688.

10 Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion*, 73.

11 PAC, RG 2, 18 April 1885, P.C. No. 821. This order-in-council amends that of 30 March and makes the appropriate substitution for the word "instead."

12 Correspondence in PAC, RG 15, Vol. 574, File 175917.

13 Dates for all Scrip Commission itineraries have been calculated by itemizing the location and date of records in the Scrip Certificate books kept by the Department of the Interior, PAC, RG 15, volume 574, vols. 1373–1386.

14 PAC, RG 2, 1 March 1886, P.C. No. 309.

15 R. Goulet, "Report Respecting Claims by Half-Breeds," Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 12 January 1887, p. 78.

16 PAC, RG 2, 14 December 1888, P.C. No. 2675.

17 Goulet, "Report," 76.

18 These various returns are compiled from information provided in N.O. Côté, "Grants to Half-Breeds of the Province of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, Comprising the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta in Extinguishment of the Indian Title, 1870–1925," (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1929). PAC, RG 15, Vol. 227.

19 *The Historical Development of the Indian Act*, 77.

20 Ibid.

21 Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion*, 74.

22 Randy B.J. Banks, "The Red River Rebellion: A Peculiar People in Exceptional Circumstances" (M.A. thesis, Department of Sociology-Anthropology, Carleton University, 1980).

23 Banks, "Red River Rebellion," 133-34.

24 George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 255-61.

25 Street to Macpherson, 5 April 1885, PAC, RG 15, Vol. 574, File 175917.

26 PAC, RG 2, 18 April 1885, P.C. No. 821.

27 Street to Macpherson, 23 May 1885, PAC, RG 15, Vol. 574, File 175915.

28 Duck to Burgess, 26 May 1886, PAC, RG 15, Vol. 501, File 175915.

29 Burgess to Street, 29 June 1885, PAC, RG 15, Vol. 574, File 175915.

30 Ibid.

31 Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 194-242.

32 *The Historical Development of the Indian Act*, 76.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Burgess to Street, 30 March 1885, PAC, RG 15, Vol. 574, File 175917.

36 Goulet, "Report," 78.

37 Goulet to Burgess, 4 August 1886, PAC, RG 15, Vol. 501, File 140862.

38 Ibid.

39 Street to Burgess, 20 May 1885, PAC, RG 15, Vol. 574, File 175917.

40 PAC, RG 2, 2 July 1885, P.C. No. 1202.

41 Burgess to Burbridge, 11 May 1885, PAC, RG 15, Vol. 574, File 175917.

42 Street to Macpherson, 9 April 1885, PAC, RG 15, Vol. 574, File 175917.

43 PAC, RG 2, 18 April 1885, P.C. No. 821.

44 PAC, RG 2, 13 April 1886, P.C. No. 657.

45 Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion*, 65-74.

46 Ibid., 65-66.

47 See, for example, a description of the techniques by a scrip buyer:

W.P. Fillmore, "Half-Breed Scrip," *Manitoba Bar News* 39, no. 2 (1973): 124.

48 Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion*, 69.

49 Ibid., 74.

50 A.M. Burgess, "Report of the Deputy Minister of the Department of the Interior," Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 28 February 1890.

51 PAC, RG 15, Vol. 583, File 187263.

52 Ibid.

53 PAC, RG 2, 18 March 1889, P.C. No. 592.

Comment on Ken Hatt, "The North-West Rebellion Scrip Commissions, 1885-1889"

Thomas Flanagan

Professor Hatt has chosen to refer to me about a score of times while ignoring other secondary literature on the later Scrip Commissions,[1] so his paper reads in part like a review of my book *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered*. I would accordingly like to correct several errors in his treatment of the views expressed in that book as well as to discuss some new interpretations of fact which he proposes.

It is regrettable that Hatt slips into the accusatory rhetoric which so often mars discussion of Native affairs. He characterizes my book as a "polemic" whose "narrowness ... makes the work closer to propaganda than social sciences and would appear to encourage racist expressions." Rather than responding to such epithets, I wish to deal with questions of fact.

Hatt has challenged my "specious" interpretation of the order-in-council of 28 January 1885, which first established the Commission of 1885. I have argued that this order-in-council was a conciliatory gesture, a first step toward treating the North-West Métis like their Manitoba cousins. Hatt thinks this is wrong, although he does not propose any alternate interpretation of the purpose of the order-in-council. His arguments are that (1) "there was no commitment to extinguish claims of the Métis," there was only to be an enumeration, and that (2) the order referred to the Manitoba Act rather than to the Dominion Lands Act, "which was the operative piece of legislation for extinguishing Métis claims in the North-West."

To judge these arguments, one must quote the order-in-council more fully than Hatt has done:

> On a Memorandum dated 26th January, 1885, from the Minister of the Interior, submitting that it is desirable with a view of settling equitably the claims of Half-Breeds in Manitoba and the North-West Territories who would have been entitled to land had they resided in Manitoba at the time of the transfer and filed their claims in due course under the Manitoba Act, and also of those who though residing in Manitoba and equitably entitled to participate in the grant, did not do so, — to ascertain the number of such Half-Breeds, and recommending that he be authorized to obtain an enumeration of them, and to employ three persons to make such enumeration.
>
> The Committee concur in the foregoing recommendation and they advise that the requisite authority be granted.[2]

Hatt's citation omits the words "with a view to settling equitably the claims of Half-Breeds...." The government apparently intended to follow the procedure used in Manitoba, in which enumeration and distribution of land or scrip had been done in distinct stages. There is no reason to think the government planned to send three men to count the Métis for no further purpose. It is true that the Dominion Lands Act is not mentioned, but the wording leaves little doubt about who would be the subjects of the enumeration. Two groups of Métis are mentioned: those "who would have been entitled to land had they resided in Manitoba at the time of the transfer" and "those who though residing in Manitoba and equally entitled to participate in the grant, did not do so." The second group are those missed in Manitoba, but the first group can only be the Métis of the North-West whose Indian title had not yet been extinguished.

Hatt's quibbles about the wording create the impression that the government really did nothing about Métis land claims until the order-in-council of 30 March 1885, four days after the battle of Duck Lake. The implication is that nothing would have happened if the Métis had not taken up arms. "Further evidence of the hasty response of the Government," writes Hatt, is seen from the fact that Street was officially appointed on 30 March.[3] But we know from his memoirs that W.P.R. Street, chairman of the Commission, was approached by the government in the second week of March.[4] We also know that the other members were approached on 18 and 19 March.[5] Further, the major change in instructions, embodied in the order-in-council of 30 March 1885, authorizing the Commission to settle claims as well as enumerate the Métis, was made on Street's advice after news of Duck Lake reached Ottawa.[6] The most plausible interpretation is that the armed rising caused Ottawa to accelerate the Commission's work and to settle Métis claims immediately, but this was a logical extension of what had been leisurely unfolding since 28 January. It was not a new departure.

Moving forward to the actual work of the Commission, Hatt writes:

> Flanagan also states that the order-in-council of 30 March was never amended and that the distribution of lands based on it may have been of dubious legality. Both assertions are false, as can be seen by consulting the correspondence and the order-in-council of 18 April 1885, which he does not mention.[7]

Hatt has quoted me correctly but has lifted my point out of context. It comes from the middle of a paragraph on the question of whether the Commission would give scrip *in addition* to land already occupied by the Métis, or whether scrip would be applied toward gaining patent for land already occupied. Although I was aware of the order-in-council of 18 April 1885, cited by Hatt, I did not mention it in this context because it did not seem to me to deal with this particular issue. The whole question is extraordinarily complex, and I may well be wrong on technical points of this type, but Hatt's bare assertion does not prove anything because it misses the point I was making.

Hatt goes on to write: "Flanagan argues that recognition of Métis claims was a mistake and that the concept of land is little more than a mystical notion."[8] His note refers to my book. What I actually wrote on that page is:

> It is a serious error to think of this whole episode as having much to do with a desire for land on the part of the Métis. They already lived on land, and their children by homesteading, could get as much land as they could use. The Métis wanted money and successfully exerted political pressure to get it. This point must be emphasized because the almost mystical character which land has assumed in contemporary native politics tends to throw an anachronistic haze of distortion over the motives of the Métis in 1884-85.[9]

This passage expresses no opinions about the desirability of recognizing Métis claims. I have argued elsewhere that it was a gratuitous mistake on the government's part to justify the Métis land grant with the phrase "towards the extinguishment of the Indian title."[10] However, I do not think the land grant itself was necessarily a bad idea. The Métis' willingness to sell their grants created a market in land which helped to compensate for the rigidity of the homestead regulations enforced by the Department of the Interior. The Métis themselves received moderate amounts of money.

Which brings us to the question of speculation. Hatt calls my analysis of this question a "tribute to the speculator" and judges it to be "misleading at best." I did not write a "celebration" of those who speculated in Métis lands; I tried to show why the Métis desired to sell their scrip. My conclusion is the same as that expressed by Hatt: "The Métis sold their scrip because that was their only reasonable option." The difference between us revolves around the question of whether there was something unfair about the transactions in which the Métis sold their scrip. Granting that the Métis were in general "shrewd bargainers," Hatt asserts: "Shrewd bargainers can only operate well in situations of relatively equal power."[11] Behind this statement lies one of the most common misconceptions about the market system, that transactions are fair only if the parties are of comparable size, power, or ability to wait. But these conditions are rarely met. Most of us are hired to work for organizations which are much larger and more powerful than ourselves; we also buy many of our consumer goods from large corporations. Hatt's logic would lead to a socialist denunciation of the entire market system.

In reality, what preserves the vitality of competition, even when the parties to a transaction are unequal in resources, is the presence of alternatives. Individually, a customer is no match for, say, Woodwards; but if she can also shop at The Bay, K-Mart, or Eaton's, she has reasonable assurance that the market price is not simply dictated by the seller. Similar considerations apply in labour markets. Even though employers are usually much bigger and more powerful than employees, competition among them leads to wages which reflect the marginal product of various types of labour.

An exception to this elementary economic reasoning occurs when a group of buyers or sellers is able to collude and thereby attempt to fix prices. A monopoly price established in such circumstances will be disadvantageous to the other side. Hatt cites the memoirs of one scrip buyer who recalled that, at Ile-à-la-Crosse in 1906, "right at the start the scrip buyers got together and decided that it would be foolish to indulge in any competitive bidding."[12] However, another author, whom Hatt does not cite, describes the scrip-buying experience of Charlie Alloway, a Winnipeg banker:

> While some of the early writers claim that scrip was sold for as little as a bottle of whiskey, he related to me that money and his own food were the only commodities he carried. Thousands of dollars were concealed in his clothing, and what could not be taken care of in this way, was carried in a bundle and used at night as a pillow. He recounted that it was only on a very rare occasion, that other purchasers did not attempt to intervene between himself and the seller, and although it was possible for the purchasers to get together and agree on the prices to be paid, this was not always the case, and there was considerable competition among the purchasers.[13]

Riel and the Rebellion, can be justly faulted for not having mentioned the possibility of collusion among scrip buyers. The question deserves further investigation because it is an empirical question that cannot be answered *a priori*. It may well be that there was a lively, competitive market in scrip in some instances and collusive restraint of trade by the purchasers in others. It would be a great contribution to scholarship if a researcher would make an impartial study of the Métis scrip market. Comparison with markets for other forms of scrip — Selkirk settlers, members of Wolseley's expedition, recipients of other military bounties — would show whether the Métis were exploited by sharp operators or whether they got their money's worth in rational transactions beneficial to both buyers and sellers.

NOTES

1 Joe Sawchuk et al., *Metis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History* (Edmonton: Metis Association of Alberta, 1981); D.J. Hall, "The Half-Breed Claims Commission," *Alberta History* 25 (1977): 1-8; Marcel Giraud, "The Western Metis after the Insurrection," *Saskatchewan History* 9 (1956): 1-15; H.H. Langton, "The Commission of 1885 to the North-West Territories," *Canadian Historical Review* 25 (1944): 38-53.

2 Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 2, 28 January 1885, P.C. no. 135.

3 Ken Hatt, "The North-West Rebellion Scrip Commissions, 1885-1889," *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1986), 192.

4 Langton, "The Commission of 1885," 41.

5 Ibid., 39.

6 Ibid., 45.

7 Hatt, "Scrip Commissions," 192.

8 Ibid., 193.

9 Thomas Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983).

10 Flanagan, *Riel*, 61–62; Thomas Flanagan, "The Case Against Métis Aboriginal Rights," *Canadian Public Policy* 9 (1983): 314–25.

11 Hatt, "Scrip Commissions," 199.

12 W.P. Fillmore, "Half-Breed Scrip," in Antoine S. Lussier and D. Bruce Sealey, eds., *The Other Natives: the-les Métis* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Métis Federation Press, 1978), Vol. II: 34. Lussier and Sealey state this text is reprinted from *Manitoba Bar News*, 1968. Hatt gives the correct citation as follows: W.P. Fillmore, "Half-Breed Scrip," *Manitoba Bar News* 39, no. 2 (1973): 124.

13 Peter Lowe, "All Western Dollars," in Lussier and Sealey, *The Other Natives*, 40.

Rip Van Jaxon: The Return of Riel's Secretary in 1884–1885 to the Canadian West, 1907–1909

Donald B. Smith

Like Rip Van Winkle awakening after his long sleep, Honoré Jaxon found the northwest in 1907 completely transformed. He had left twenty-two years earlier, when a sea of buffalo grass had stretched almost unbroken across the prairies. In 1885 one travelled north of the Canadian Pacific Railway (only completed across the prairies two years earlier) by horseback, foot, or cart. Only approximately 25,000 whites, 20,000 Indians and 5,000 Métis then lived in the North-West Territories.[1]

In Honoré's absence hundreds of thousands of white immigrants had arrived, the population by 1914 rising to over a million in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan (the last two provinces being created in 1905). People speaking all kinds of languages had come: Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, Doukhobors, Russians, Icelanders, Swedes, Greeks, Italians; as well as great numbers of eastern Canadians, Britons, and Americans. Railways crisscrossed the prairies. In 1908 one witness wrote: "Over these great plains the wave of immigration is rolling to-day — a wave about 500 miles long, lapping up each year another ten miles in width."[2]

The short little man, with the loud booming voice had changed — physically at least — after over two decades in Chicago, Illinois.[3] The middle-aged veteran of the troubles of 1885 returned with a receding hairline, greying hair, and a few more pounds on what had once been a lean frame. He came back as well with a new name, "Jaxon," the French pronunciation of Jackson, and a new first name. To identify with the people he had so closely allied himself with at Batoche in 1884-85, Will Jackson now called himself Honoré Jaxon. But the name and his physical appearance aside, the political principles of the young idealist of 1885 remained exactly the same. Louis Riel's secretary in 1884-85 came back with the same conviction that one must help the exploited and the oppressed.

For Honoré the spring of 1885 was much more than a memory — the taking and wearing of a Métis headband constituted the turning point of his life.[4] He had come to the North-West Territories before the Canadian Pacific Railway had been built across the prairies. Will's parents had moved westward from Ontario in 1881 and Will had joined them at Prince Albert in 1882. As one of the best educated men in the district, Will (who had completed all but the fourth and final year of his classics course at the University of Toronto) had become the secretary of the local Farmer's Union. In this connection he had met Louis Riel in the summer of 1884.

Through his visits to Batoche and the Métis settlements the young idealist began to see the Métis' grievances as being far greater than those of the white settlers. Sympathetic to their cause he went to live at Batoche, to serve as Riel's secretary. Rose Ouellette, the sixteen-year-old niece of Gabriel Dumont (Rose's mother Isabelle Dumont Ouellette was Gabriel's sister) became his girlfriend. During the intense religious and political excitement at Batoche early in 1885, Will converted to Roman Catholicism, and in his attempt to act as a bridge between the Métis and white communities, later accepted Riel's reformed Christianity as his religion. Once fighting broke out with the Canadians, though, the Métis no longer trusted the young white man. Like neutral parties in most armed conflicts he became the enemy of both sides. Doubting his loyalty in a fight against his own people, the Métis imprisoned him after the first clash at Duck Lake. The Canadians did the same when they captured Batoche six weeks later.

The several weeks Will spent in a crowded vermin-infested cell in Prince Albert, the taunts of the white eastern Canadian militia men taking him to his trial at Regina, the trial itself — all had served to complete the personal transformation. Tried and committed to the lunatic asylum at Lower Fort Garry, Will stayed only a few months — until he escaped in early November 1885. On 2 November he simply walked away, and after living on a few berries and nuts for five days, he reached the American border. He began a lecture tour in North Dakota and Minnesota calling for a reprieve of Louis Riel. When the Canadians hung Riel on 16 November Will called it "the legal murder of a patriot and statesman," in a series of lectures in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Upon his arrival in Chicago in early 1886 he presented himself as a Métis, and several years later adopted the name Honoré Jaxon.

Honoré worked in 1907 as an editorial writer for the *Union Labor Advocate*, the monthly publication of the Chicago Federation of Labor. As early as his first months in the city, in 1886, he helped the carpenters' union in its fight for an eight-hour working day.[5] He spoke at the first convention of the American Populist party in 1892, and assisted in the organization of the first world conference of anarchists in 1893. He joined in Coxey's march of the unemployed on Washington in the late spring of 1894. He also belonged to the Chicago committee of Credit Foncier, a company establishing a communal experiment at Topolobampo Bay on Mexico's northwestern coast. In 1897 he had encountered and accepted the new world religion from Persia, Bahá'i, which stressed the simplicity of life and service to suffering mankind.[6]

In mid-September 1907 the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, then holding their annual convention in Winnipeg, welcomed the distinguished visitor. *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair's best-seller the year before, had informed many of the delegates of the horrors faced by Chicago's workingmen. Upon being invited to speak, Honoré made "a short but effective speech," leaving a good impression of "his earnestness and ability."[7]

While in Winnipeg Honoré contacted the sons of two very important individuals. Jean Riel, the twenty-five year old son of Louis Riel, lived in the Riel family home in St. Boniface, his father's native town. In this same house Riel's body had lain in state for two days after his execution. Honoré also called upon Hugh John Macdonald, the son of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, who by refusing to grant Riel a pardon, had sent Riel to the gallows.

Twenty-two years earlier Jaxon had, from his exile in the United States, hastily written out a telegram, and sent it to his sister in Winnipeg. He had asked her to forward it under his name to Sir John A. Macdonald:

> If you hang Riel you will provoke a more dangerous and atrocious outbreak. He is the sole mouthpiece of the aborigines and must be heard. Let him free and I am willing to be shot in his place.[8]

Honoré had come back to Canada with Aimée Montfort, his French Canadian wife, to see his family in Prince Albert, and to write a book on 1885. He wanted to interview as many survivors of the clash as possible, and to collect all the information. Jean Riel had strongly encouraged him, " . . . je vous prie d'écrire l'histoire de la rébellion de 1885, au Nord Ouest, parce que vous avez été témoin oculaire et que vous pourrez dire la vérité: ("I urge you to write the history of the North West Rebellion of 1885, because you were an eye witness, and you can tell the truth").[9]

In early December, Honoré travelled to Regina, then a town of eight thousand, eight times as large as at the time of his trial in 1885. Twenty-two years after a Regina jury had judged him to be insane for converting first to Roman Catholicism, and then to Riel's reformed Christianity, he addressed another Regina audience. Riel's secretary told the local trade unionists of the reality of working class struggle. If western Canadian workers stopped resisting the encroachments of capitalism they would, in the words of Karl Marx, "be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation." Familiar with Marx's *Capital*, Engel's writings, and works by the anarchist Prince Kropotkin, he cited them repeatedly, fitting them into his own original synthesis of Marxism and anarchism.

At a Labour Party meeting in Regina on 8 December 1907, the man still remembered as Riel's secretary went right to the heart of the matter. Society, he began, was divided into two classes, "the people who ate and those who were eaten." So many injustices cried out for correction: the worker needed a living wage, the resource-rich Crown land should belong to all and not be divided up by an eastern government to be sold to speculators. Above all, the farmers and labourers should strive for "fair play" for the Indian and Métis, whose economic state was inferior to even that of the hard-pressed white workingman. At the very end Honoré proposed the establishment of Producers' Social and Economic Discussion Circles for workers and farmers in which they could explore the causes of their inferior economic status.[10]

A slender man in his late twenties, seated in the audience, had helped arrange the talk. Tom Molloy had been a dedicated socialist for some time. After several years as a typesetter for Regina newspapers he had become president of the local Typographical Union, which in 1906 had won the right to an eight-hour working day for its members. The newly-organized Regina Trades and Labour Council had recently elected a young trade unionist as their first president. In 1907 he also served as the vice-president of the Regina Branch of the Labour Party. Riel's secretary's talk impressed Tom with its hard-hitting rhetoric, with lines like, "A thousand babes go supperless to bed that one monster's brat may spew on silk."[11]

Tom Molloy, Honoré's host while in Regina, visited him regularly during his stay. Although he had been only two and a half at the time of the uprising, Tom had grown up with tales of the Rebellion. His father, a telegrapher, had run the central repeating station for the North-West Territories at Clark's Crossing on the South Saskatchewan River, just twenty kilometres from the centre of the Métis uprising. During the battle of Batoche in early May 1885 the Molloy children had hidden in the vacant Caswell home while their father kept his "ear to the sounder." His father had known Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, and the young twenty-three year-old William Henry Jackson,[12] the young Protestant from Ontario, the former secretary of the local Farmers' Union who had gone to join the Métis at Batoche.

Tom knew that Riel's white ally had converted to the Roman Catholic Church just before the outbreak of the uprising. While many Protestants believed that this had constituted the first clear sign of his mental instability, Tom, himself a Roman Catholic, naturally disagreed. He also defended Honoré's adherence in 1885 to Riel's religion, as merely further evidence of his friend's "unorthodox ideas about religion." (To Tom, a devoted Roman Catholic, Honoré's Bahá'i faith appeared just as alien, no doubt, as Riel's reformed Christianity.) The young trade unionist also strongly supported Riel's and Jaxon's fight, twenty-two years earlier, for provincial status for the North-West, a goal achieved only two years before Honoré's return.

Certainly Tom's new friend did have his peculiarities. How curious that he had changed his name to the French-sounding, "Honoré Joseph Jaxon." In Regina he talked of "harmony" and "vibrations." He believed in the power of thought projection. Yet these peculiarities aside, Tom respected this remarkable individual who was so full of admirable principles and ideals.

The president of Regina's Trades and Labour Council never forgot his talks with "Riel's secretary." Years later he recalled his visits to Honoré's room at the Alexandra Hotel on Hamilton Street. Often when Tom dropped by he found his friend writing away at a small table. On the table and the floor lay masses of paper covered with Honoré's handwriting, and rough sketches of the battlefields of 1885.

Honoré had come west in 1907 to see his family and prepare his history. The fact that his brother worked as the Acting Indian Agent at the Mistawasis Cree Indian Reserve, just west of Prince Albert, facilitated his task, providing him with good Indian contacts. After leaving Regina, Honoré went directly to Mistawasis where his mother lived with his brother, and there rejoined Aimée, who had been spending several weeks with her husband's family.

What had long impressed Jaxon about the Indians was their "freedom from selfishness, and from the grasping for property and riches as among the whites,"[13] the very traits that infuriated senior officials of the Department of Indian Affairs. Clifford Sifton, for one, in his position as the federal Minister of the Interior and Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs from 1896 to 1905, had no respect for the ideals of a communal society. As he once stated: "One of the principal ideas western men have is that it is right to take anything in sight provided nobody else is ahead of them. As a rule, it is sound policy for the government to fall in with this idea and encourage the people to go ahead."[14] Honoré, a natural egalitarian, objected to such a promotion of human greed, particularly as it left the Indians and the Métis aside. Nearly a quarter of a century earlier he had written down his dream — "Let the white man delight in seeing the Indian helped forward to fill his place as a producer of wealth...."[15] From his own observations at Mistawasis — despite his brother's efforts — so little help was given. The Indians stood condemned to a second-rate life in the very country that once belonged to them.

Politics soon attracted Honoré once again. He attended the first Liberal Party convention of the new federal electoral district of Battleford in early 1908, serving on both the resolution and the nomination committees.[16] All summer while he and Aimée visited the sites of Rebellion — Batoche, Cut Knife Hill — he thought about politics. Finally with the federal election of October 1908 he decided to present himself as an independent candidate in the electoral district of Prince Albert. Having never taken out American citizenship, the man from Chicago, and now Mistawasis, was eligible to run. In early October Honoré brought forward for his deposit two hundred dollars of the money he had saved "for the writing of North Western History."[17]

To publicize his campaign Honoré began a newspaper, *Fair Play and Free Play*, in which he included "A Song of the Citizen," a poem he had written summarizing his own philosophy. The third stanza reads,

> Thus, in human affairs,
> More than half of our cares
> Come from men who in greed are enwrapped.
> They're too lazy to work
> And all effort they shirk,
> Save to get honest people entrapped!
> So, while others produce
> All real wealth that we use,
> They produce only schemes to possess!
> And they chuckle in glee
> Like a blood-sucking flea
> While the real working man they assess.[18]

Fair Play and Free Play contains the essence of Honoré's thought. The paper, published in Prince Albert on 29 October 1908, includes in one line the man's entire social philosophy. He wrote, "men are the creatures of their environment and of their heredity (which latter is in substance the environment of their ancestors)." In his mind no room existed for race theory, the current belief that there were "superior" and "inferior" races in the world. Only two groups existed in his universe: the exploiters and the exploited. He proposed the establishment in town and country of "Producers' Social and Economic Discussion Circles open to any well behaving person, without regard to creed, race, party or sex, and dedicated to the studying and proclaiming and promoting of the interests of the Producing Class . . . ."[19]

Occasionally Honoré must have given thought to the political success of two of his contemporaries. He often used to say that he had attended the University of Toronto with Frederick Haultain,[20] who was a fellow classicist, two years ahead of Honoré. At the turn of the century Haultain had already served as the Premier of the old North-West Territories. Frank Oliver of Edmonton, an old acquaintance from the political protest days of 1884-85, had also enjoyed great success. He had become a Member of Parliament, and had just replaced Clifford Sifton as the federal Minister of the Interior in 1905. But Honoré was not jealous — in his opinion both men had sold their souls for power. Haultain, appealing to the popular prejudices of the Protestant English-speaking settlers, had led the successful fight in the 1890s to eliminate French-language school rights in the North-West Territories. Rather than repudiate the language Honoré had taken a French-sounding name. Then another treachery — Oliver, like Sifton before him, had made his alliance with the "plundering classes," leaving their exploitation of the common people unchecked.

Had Honoré presented his radical ideas before a western Canadian farm and labour electorate in 1919, the year of the Winnipeg General Strike, he would have found a ready audience, but it was only 1908. The public was not ready. Honoré suffered a crushing defeat, receiving only 87 votes to the Liberals' 2398, and the Conservatives 2209.[21]

The defeated politician returned to his history of the Rebellion, which he had planned for over twenty years. During the previous summer, he and Aimée had visited the battle sites in a prairie schooner and lived in a tepee of Honoré's own design.[22] On 12 July Honoré had happily reported to his mother and Eastwood: "Aimée is enjoying herself immensely. She has now slept for two nights on the ground in the tepee and admits that she has slept soundly notwithstanding the hardness of the ground."[23]

In his travels Honoré took copious notes, shot photographs, and no doubt collected documents offered to him by Riel's surviving acquaintances and their descendants. He met Louis Schmidt, Riel's boyhood friend, and veteran missionary Father Lacombe. In his travels Honoré discovered that racial animosities remained high. As the Reverend A.E. Smith, a contemporary observer, noted, the whites in the Prince Albert area had little respect for those they termed "Half-Breeds," and whom they discriminated against as "inferiors."[24]

A quarter of a century later Honoré again met at Batoche men and women whom he had known in rebellion days. At the rectory and the church he saw the bullet holes in the buildings' wooden walls. Over the old cemetery and across the battlefield he walked with Aimée. To the Métis, Honoré was a *revenant*, someone who had come back out of their past.

At Batoche, and other important landmarks of 1885, Honoré found terrible neglect. At Batoche he found that the house from which he and Riel had issued several important manifestos in 1884-85, had been removed piecemeal, no effort having been made to preserve it or any other historic buildings. In late 1909 Honoré made, at his own expense, a totally unsuccessful trip to Ottawa to ask the federal government to help preserve the sites.[25]

The Edmonton *Journal* interviewed Honoré when he passed through the city in early October 1909. He checked into his hotel carrying a small suitcase, two huge cameras, and an iron tripod. Realizing that the "rotund little man, with a huge forehead that shone out from beneath a spacious Christie set back on his head, and with features that radiated good nature," had been Riel's secretary, the reporter asked a pointed question about the Métis leader. Pounding his left palm with his right fist Honoré defended his friend:

> Louis Riel died a patriot. He was not a corrupt man. He could not be bought. He had his ideals, and they were high ideals. He believed he was right in attempting to put them into effect. I believed he was right. Fresh from Toronto university, an idealist myself, I joined him and his party, and did my best to back him up in his fight. We did not want the rebellion. It was not our intention to rebel. The rebellion was forced upon us. What we wanted was justice for the half-breeds and justice for the white settlers . . . .[26]

That previous summer, Honoré had travelled a great deal, introducing his new social ideas, and researching his history. He went as far as the mining district along the Alberta-British Columbia border, and addressed hundreds of striking coal miners at Frank, Alberta. "Riel's Secretary" encouraged them to "stand firm" in their demands. While in Calgary for several weeks in June he was elected to a committee of the Calgary Socialist Party. Travelling eastward to Regina he spoke at the organizational meeting of the local Producers' Social and Economic Discussion Circle. From Regina he went north to Saskatoon, then in the midst of a strike by the labourers building the town's first sewer system.[27]

During the first decade of this century Saskatoon grew at a faster rate than any other town in western Canada. Its population rose from 113 people in 1901, to nearly 7,000 by 1908. By 1908 the three great railroads had their east-west links running through the town, and wholesalers began building warehouses. In 1909 the town began the construction of a sewer system. Enter Honoré, who in the 1890s had been a contractor himself in Chicago.[28]

With his experience in the building trades Honoré knew how much the city fathers were taking advantage of their sewer workers. They paid neither an adequate wage, nor took adequate safety precautions. The workers called for an increase of five cents per hour to twenty-five cents, and requested that all the contractors or corporations conducting public works furnish adequate cribbing, after a depth of six feet, to prevent cave-ins. When a board of conciliation was struck the workers asked Honoré to act as one of their three representatives on the six-man board. He did a good job. In the words of Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, the authors of *Saskatoon: The First Half-Century*, "... the newspaper accounts of the proceedings make Jaxon sound a more reasonable and adept negotiator than the Saskatoon elite."[29]

Once the hearings ended in September Honoré travelled to Edmonton then back through Winnipeg on his way to Ottawa, to gain the federal government's support to preserve the west's historic sites. The *Manitoba Free Press* interviewed him in Winnipeg. With Aimée at his side he told the reporter of his mission to Ottawa, and what he had collected himself over the last two years:

> I have been taking many photographs of the old places and old-timers, and am just like a man who has been up in the north for two years and has returned with his pelts. I have procured many photographs of value and have compiled many things of historical interest during my trip.[30]

His efforts to secure federal support for historical preservation failed completely, and their plan rejected, Honoré and Aimée returned to Chicago. His path now becomes somewhat more difficult to follow. We know that he enthusiastically supported the Mexican Revolution of 1911, for he became the secretary of the "Mexican Liberal Defense Conference of Chicago" in July 1911. In September he attended the 44th Trade Union Congress in Manchester, England, as a "Special Envoy to Europe on behalf of the Insurrectos of Mexico." From England he wrote to "Comrade Joseph Riel," Louis's brother in Manitoba, explaining that in England he had "been presenting the case of the Spanish-Indian Metis of Mexico in their noble struggle for land and liberty . . . ." While in London, England, he assisted a group of English Bahá'is in beginning a movement to bring "the people of the East and West into closer social contact — especially, the some two thousand Indian students in London."[31]

Upon his return to Canada from England Honoré spoke in Montréal to a meeting of the local Trades and Labour Council, where he was warmly received, and he visited Louis Riel's daughter-in-law, Madame Jean Riel (her husband had died in July 1908) in Québec City. He reported to Montréal Bahá'is on the "vital connection" between "organized labor people and socialists" and the Teachings of Bahá u'lláh, the world leader of the Bahá'i community. Later he also visited groups in Ottawa and Toronto. Then Honoré sinks back into obscurity in Chicago, a city in 1911 with a population of two million, greater than the entire population of Canada's four western provinces. We do know that he contributed time to the Bahá'i Committee responsible for purchasing land at Wilmette, Illinois, around the site of North America's first Bahá'i house of worship. He next emerges as the author of an article in the American Bahá'i magazine, the *Star of the West*, in the volume for 1912, describing the visit of Bahá u'lláh to Chicago.[32] Sophie Loeding, whose parents were among the first adherents to the Bahá'i faith in Chicago, remembers him well. At the age of ninety-four she recalled this "vivid personality":

> As I grew older and more perceptive I realized that he was not only very intelligent but could also very well be termed an intellectual. He was a forceful and convincing speaker and was at home in many and diverse fields. His appearance was not prepossessing but he won any audience by the force and depth of his delivery.[33]

In the 1920s Honoré moved to New York, a city which he loved for all its opportunities for learning, the wonderful museums and the New York Public Library. He went alone, as Aimée had already left him, probably with Honoré's blessing. Like many anarchists, he had come to see marriage as a "man-made scheme for the annexing of female slaves."[34] His life mission now became the establishment of a library for the Indians of Saskatchewan. He bought old books and pamphlets and saved newspapers, whatever he considered of value, and stored them in his basement apartment, for he believed that "an interesting and instructive and useful library constitutes, as Thomas Carlyle has said, the best of all universities." If he could transport this library to western Canada, to land he still owned near Prince Albert, the Indians could educate themselves, and "they'd get a better deal in this generation than they had in the past."

Honoré's dream died on 13 December 1951. On that icy cold morning his employers, the owners of a four-storey apartment building, evicted him from his basement rooms. They had, a few weeks earlier, discharged him, claiming that their ninety-year-old janitor and furnaceman could no longer adequately perform his duties, and then on the 13th they put him out on the street. Three men had worked for six hours moving his several tons of material onto the sidewalk — leaving a pile of paper-stuffed cartons and boxes two metres high, three metres across, and eleven metres long. The New York dailies followed the story of the human packrat as a curiosity piece, and the wire services picked it up, sending the tale across North America.

Honoré died one month later on 10 January 1952. On this occasion the New York *Times* in its obituary came closer to discovering his true identity than it had in its December article. It described him as a "major in the cavalry of Metis tribesmen" in 1885; "His father was an independent fur trader who fought the Hudson [*sic*] Bay Company and acquired sufficient wealth to send him to Toronto University, where he won honors in the classics." The *Herald-Tribune* learned that he had served in 1885, "as an aide to Louis Riehl [*sic*].... Riehl was his hero."

Luckily Bruce Peel, chief cataloguer for the Rutherford Library at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, who had undertaken research on the history of Saskatoon, chanced to see the Canadian Press wire story out of New York, containing Jaxon's obituary. From the information provided he quickly identified Honoré Jaxon (whom he had discovered when reviewing the Saskatoon sewer workers' strike), as Will Jackson, Riel's secretary in 1885.[35]

On 23 January 1952 the Canadian Press sent the news of Bruce Peel's discovery across the country. A copy writer added to the story that Jaxon (or Jackson) had been "suffering from a mild form of insanity" during the troubles of 1885. Tom Molloy, the first president of the Regina Trades and Labour Council, who still lived in the city, read this and objected to it. While speaking with Kay Kritzwiser, a columnist for the Regina *Leader-Post*, he told her that Jaxon's relationship to Louis Riel in reality paralleled that of General Alfred Gruenther to General Eisenhower. Gruenther served as Eisenhower's Chief of Staff in World War II, and was again appointed in December 1950 the Chief of Staff to Eisenhower, then the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Europe. It was a flattering comparison. Gruenther, who at forty-three had become the youngest full General in the United States Army, was known as the "Brain of the Army."

Tom Molloy, then sixty-nine, enjoyed great respect throughout

Saskatchewan. The former Regina typesetter had become Saskatchewan's Deputy Minister of Railways, Labour, and Industries from 1928 to 1934. He was awarded the King George V Silver Jubilee medal in recognition of outstanding public service in 1935. Since 1938 he had worked as the first president of the Federation of Saskatchewan Credit Unions which he had helped to organize. He was, in 1952, one of the last individuals left who had known Honoré Jaxon during his Canadian visit in 1907 to 1909. He knew his worth. One of Tom's final comments to Kay Kritzwiser concerned the manuscript he had so often seen Honoré struggling over. "If ever this were found, there would be a tale to intrigue historians."[36]

It was too late. On 13 December 1951 two tons of Honoré's newspaper bundles, file boxes and cartons had been sold on the street as waste paper. If his manuscripts and notes on 1885 had miraculously escaped that preliminary dispersal, they did not survive the second on 10 January 1952. After "Riel's Secretary" died the precious notes and manuscripts went almost certainly to the New York City dump.[37]

NOTES

My thanks to Lorne Grant (a great-nephew of Honoré Jaxon); Professor Cyril Greenland, School of Social Work, McMaster University; Dr. John D. Griffin, formerly General Director, Canadian Mental Health Association; Dr. Thomas Flanagan, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, and Miriam Carey of Calgary, for kindly allowing me to examine their research materials on Honoré Jaxon, and to the Department of Inter-Library Loans of the University of Calgary for their help in obtaining several dozen reels of American and Canadian newspapers on microfilm. Richard Schneirov, of the Newberry Library, Chicago, provided useful references to Honoré Jaxon's activities in Chicago labour organizations. I am grateful to Robert Stockman, now preparing a doctorate of theology in the history of religion in America at the Harvard Divinity School, for much of the information on Honoré Jaxon's membership in Bahá'i in Chicago and for putting me in contact with Sophie Loeding who knew Honoré Jaxon in Chicago in the early twentieth century.

1 *Census of the Three Provisional Districts of the North-West Territories 1884-1885* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1886), 10-11.

2 George Lloyd, "The Church's Missions in Christendom. White Settlers in Canada," in *Pan-Anglican Papers. Being Problems for Consideration at the Pan-Anglican Congress, 1908. Church Work among White Settlers beyond the Sea* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1908), 3.

3 A complete review of the career of Honoré Joseph Jaxon appears in Donald B. Smith, "Honoré Joseph Jaxon: A Man who Lived for Others," *Saskatchewan History* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 81-101.

For an interesting review of Honoré's activities at the turn of the century, see: W.J.C. Cherwinski, "Honoré Joseph Jaxon, Agitator, Disturber, producer of plans to make men think, and chronic Objector...," *Canadian Historical Review* 46, no. 2 (June 1965): 122-33.

4 "Riel's Secretary," *The Daily Argus* (Fargo, North Dakota), 28 November 1885, p. 5, c. 3. A full account of Will's activities in the North-West, in the early 1880s (until his departure for the United States) appears in Donald B. Smith, "William Henry Jackson: Riel's Disciple," in A.S. Lussier, ed., *Pelletier-Lathlin Memorial Lecture Series. Brandon University, 1979-1980* (Brandon: Department of Native Studies, 1980), 47-81.

5 Richard Schneirov, "The Knights of Labor in the Chicago Labor Movement and in Municipal Politics, 1877-1887" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1984), 448-51.

6 Robert H. Stockman, *The Baha'i Faith in America. Origins 1892-1900* Volume 1 (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), 90-93. Smith, "Jaxon," 90-91.

7 *Voice* (Winnipeg), 20 September 1907.

8 William H. Jackson, Telegram to Sir John A. Macdonald, cited in "Riel's Secretary," (Toronto) *Daily Mail*, 16 November 1885. My thanks to Miriam Carey of Calgary for this reference. Smith, "Jaxon," 93.

9 Jean Louis Riel à Honoré Jaxon, St. Vital, Manitoba, le 8 juin 1908, cited in "Il a vu la veuve du fils de Louis Riel," *La Presse* (Montréal), 22 février 1912, p. 1, cc. 8-9. My thanks to Diane Payment of Winnipeg for this reference.

10 Smith, "Jaxon," 93-94.

11 A good review of his life appears in E. Saddlemyer, "Thomas M. Molloy," History 435 paper, College of Arts and Science, University of Saskatchewan, Regina, April 1968, Saskatchewan Archives Board. See also: Muriel Clements, *By Their Bootstraps: A History of the Credit Union Movement in Saskatchewan* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1965),152-54. He is mentioned as the vice-president of the Regina branch of the Labour Party in *The Voice* (Winnipeg), 25 October 1907, p. 12, c. 4.

The quotation by Jaxon appears in, "Canadian Labour Party. Address by Honoré J. Jaxon — Denounces Special Privilege," *Saskatchewan Labor's Realm* (Regina), 13 December 1907, p. 1, c. 1.

12 Kay Kritzwiser, "K.M.K.'s Column," (Regina) *Leader-Post*, 24 January 1952. The references to Molloy's memories of Jaxon are taken from this article.

13 "W.H. Jackson," (Toronto) *Daily Mail*, 3 December 1885. My thanks to Miriam Carey of Calgary for this reference.

14 Clifford Sifton quoted in Edgar McInnis, *Canada: A Political and Social History* 4th ed. (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), 442.

15 Will Jackson to Albert Monkman, dated 2 February 1885, quoted in T.E. Jackson, "Riel's Secretary," (Toronto) *Globe*, 2 July 1885.

16 Honoré to "Dear Folks," dated Old Battleford, 11 January 1908, Jaxon Papers, in the possession of Lorne Grant.

17 *Fair Play and Free Play*, 1, no. 1, 8, 29 October 1908. Jaxon Papers, in the possession of Lorne Grant.

18 Ibid., 2.

19 Ibid., 5, 1.

20 Kritzwiser, "Column."

21 Smith, "Jaxon," 94.

22 Ibid.

23 Honoré to "Eastwood and Mother," dated Daumais' Ranch, 12 July 1908. Jaxon Papers, in the possession of Lorne Grant.

24 A.E. Smith, *All My Life: An Autobiography* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1949), 28.

25 "Jaxon would Preserve Historical Landmarks," (Edmonton) *Journal*, 14 October 1909; see also "To Preserve Historic Fields," (Edmonton) *Bulletin*, 15 October 1909.

26 "Riel a Martyr Says H. Jaxon," (Edmonton) *Journal*, 4 October 1909., p. 1, c. 1.

27 Smith, "Jaxon," 95.

28 Ibid., 91, 92, 95. D.C. Kerr, "Saskatoon 1910-1913: Ideology of the Boomtime," *Saskatchewan History* 32, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 16-17.

29 Smith, "Jaxon," 95. Don Kerr and Stan Hanson, *Saskatoon: The First Half-Century* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), 102.

30 "Was Secretary of Louis Riel," *Manitoba Free Press*, 14 October 1909, p. 12, c. 2.

31 Smith, "Jaxon," 95. Arthur Cuthbert, "News Notes. London, England," *Star of the West* 2, no. 16, 13.

To obtain an idea of the philosophy Jaxon supported in Mexico, see: Ricardo Flores Magon, *Land and Liberty: Anarchist Influences in the Mexican Revolution*. Compiled and introduced by David Poole. (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1977). Jaxon's mission to England is mentioned on page 137. My thanks to Sid Holt of Gleichen, Alberta, for this reference.

32 Letter to the author from Sophie Loeding, Wilmette, Illinois, 17 February 1985.

33 Smith, "Jaxon," 95. May Maxwell, "Letter from Montreal," *Star of the West* 3, no. 1, 8. Stockman, *Baha'i*, 92.

A very good description of Honoré in Chicago in the early twentieth century appears in Lloyd Lewis, "Honoré Jaxon, Forgotten Crusader," (Chicago) *Sun*, 3 February 1947. Lewis quotes Otto McFeely of Chicago, who worked as the publicity manager for Eugene Debs, the American Socialist Party's presidential candidate in 1908. As McFeeley recalled in 1947, "The cops and the middle class Chicagoans thought he was just a crank but the intelligentsia, the bankers, the college professors and the labor union men they knew he was worth listening to, for he could not only talk classic English with an Indian eloquence but he had an immense amount of learning."

34 Smith, "Jaxon," 95.

35 Ibid., 95-96.

36 Kritzwiser, "Column."

37 Smith, "Jaxon," 81-83.

The North West Mounted Police and Indian Policy After the 1885 Rebellion

John Jennings

A crucial test of a system of law is the treatment of minorities.[1] After the 1885 Rebellion the Plains Indians could be considered a minority. Although numerically still in the majority, the Rebellion had extinguished what little was left of their once formidable power. After 1885 there would still be outbursts which would frighten settlers and worry the Mounted Police, but the Indians' ability to stage a major war receded quickly in the numbing atmosphere of the reservation.

As the fear of Indian power subsided, there appeared a definite shift in the attitude of the Mounted Police toward them. No longer is there the breathless sense of adventure and admiration for Indians that is so striking in the first reports and biographies of the early Police. Gone, too, is the tone of respect for a proud warrior people. The Police after 1885, in most cases, were still scrupulously fair in their dealing with the Indians, but the early emphasis on understanding and compassion began to be replaced by one of coercion.

In the first decade of the Mounted Police on the Plains beginning in 1874, a rapport was established with the Indians which was based on mutual respect and a realization on the part of the Indians that the Mounted Police were their best protection from the rapacity of the fast encroaching frontier. In this first decade the Police made it clear that they would take the part of the Indians and also that they were prepared to treat white transgressions forcefully. A study of the crime records for this first decade demonstrates without question that the Police at first treated Indian crime far more leniently than white crime. But relations between the Police and the Indians began to shift in the early 1880s as the newly established Department of Indian Affairs began to take over some of the functions that the Police had previously performed. At the same time the Indians, now on reservations, were subjected to the Indian Department's policy of total assimilation. Plains Indian culture, for the moment, was shattered and the resulting bitterness largely destroyed the former harmony with the Police.[2]

The Rebellion is an obvious watershed both in Police and in Indian history. Police policy toward the Indians after the Rebellion was to be significantly different from the early days. But the Rebellion in Police and Indian history should not be overemphasized. For most of the Indians of the plains, the Rebellion was but an exciting moment in the gradual evolution of their lot. Nor should the Rebellion be stressed too much in Police history. It caused no dramatic change in relations with most Indians. Police attitudes had already begun to harden subtly even before 1885. By the early 1880s the Police were no longer dealing with a strong nomadic people who represented one of the great equestrian cultures of history. It was much harder to respect a people whom circumstances had reduced to a welfare society.

Unquestionably the Rebellion caused a deterioration in relations between Indians and Police, but there was another cause, one more fundamental and deep-rooted — the reservation system. By 1885 the full impact of this system had been felt by the Indians and they had learned to their dismay that the reservation was not quite as pictured at the time of treaty.

At first, in the early 1880s, the reservation had been thought of by the Indians as the place where food was provided when there were no buffalo, but almost from the start the Indian Department had insisted on a policy of requiring work for food.[3] At first, at least so the Indian Affairs' reports indicate, the Indians were willing to comply with this new experiment. But in the early 1880s, during the infancy of the reservation system, there were few tools or farm instructors on the reserves, so the government was forced to feed Indians with no work required in return.[4]

Here was a situation which worried the government. Obviously Indians could not be allowed to starve, yet officials feared that they were beginning to spawn a welfare society. Then too, there was the problem of explaining the spending of almost the entire Indian Budget on the North-West Territories. The Indian Department was a little embarrassed and defensive.[5]

The reservation policy also had a cultural problem to overcome. Farming, at first, was considered by Indian men to be women's work. There had been in Plains Indian society a clear and logical split in the duties of men and women; it certainly had not been part of the function of a hunter to occupy himself with domestic chores. Now, under the reservation system, men were expected to do work that was demeaning for a warrior. Yet there was no alternative, except to kill ranchers' cattle.

It is surprising that there was not more hostility to the government work policy. Certainly there were some instances before 1885 of clashes with the Police on the issue of rations, but there was a general compliance with the work policy.[6] All the early reports of Indian Affairs were brimming with optimism for the new agricultural policy. Sir John A. Macdonald, in his report as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, wrote glowingly in 1882 of "important progress" and "wonderful success" in Indian agriculture. So much progress had been made among the Indians of Treaty Six that the Government was able to cut back on assistance.[7] Only One Arrow's band near Batoche was not doing well. It was reported that all Indians in Treaty Seven were making "remarkable progress" in agriculture, as were those in Treaty Four. It is unfortunate that Sir John A. Macdonald has not been properly recognized for his superb fairy tales.

It is important to note that the Indian Department in this period was following a conscious policy of reducing aid so that Indians would become more self-sufficient. The Government did not cut back on its assistance merely because Canada was going through a depression in this period which required a reduction in Government spending. The Indian Department cut back rations in what it considered to be a positive move to wean the Indians from a nomadic life and turn them into farmers. But the assertions in these reports that the Indians were reacting to this policy with unsuppressed joy were either hopelessly naive or downright dishonest.

The Indians, unfortunately, were a bit slow to see that everything they had believed in for centuries was wrong. Since most of them did not appear enthusiastic to embrace the new era, the policy of the Indian Department had to be based on compulsion. The most obvious example of this policy was requiring work in return for rations, which, in the thinking of the Indian Department, meant that Indians would be forced to learn agricultural skills to stay alive.

But the main focus of Indian officials was on the children, especially the ones who were still young enough to be easily reshaped. One of the treaty promises had been to provide schools for Indian children, and these were quickly established. These schools were compulsory and parents who were reluctant to send their children were threatened with the termination of their rations and treaty money.[8] In other words, deliver your children to the assimilation process or starve. The complaint of one Indian to the Police said it all — the white man had taken everything from them and now even their children.[9]

How did all this affect the Mounted Police? In a general way the Indians regarded them as part of the government which was responsible for their unhappiness. But, more specifically, it became the duty of the Police to return children who had run home to their parents to the schools. An ordinance, enacted by Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney in 1886, stated that the "rights, powers and authority" of Indian parents whose children were in industrial schools ceased while the school was in session. Any child who left the school before the time authorized could be "compelled to return." And upon requisition from the principal of the school the Police "shall apprehend such offender and return him to the Institution from which he escaped, to be dealt with according to law."[10]

It appears that the reactions of the Police to these orders were mixed. There is a tone of outrage in the Police report that the principal of St. Paul's school on the Blood Reserve had been told that if he continued to lock his students in the school buildings at night and there was a fire which killed any of them, he would be charged with manslaughter.[11] Yet another report stated that assistance was "promptly given" to Father Hugonard at Qu'Appelle who sought Police aid in bringing back runaways.[12]

Fortunately there was no blood spilled over education, but it was a distinct possibility. The Blackfoot, in particular, were most unhappy about these education policies and were, according to their agent, Magnus Begg, in a constant state of suppressed excitement on the subject of schooling.[13] Some of their resentment must obviously have been aimed at the Police, but they saved most of it for the school authorities.

The agriculture and school programmes of the Government were the two most obvious elements in a general policy of assimilation. But these policies were not enough. To have them work it was also necessary to eliminate pagan and communal beliefs. To this end Indian officials decided it was necessary to undermine the influence of Indian leaders and to replace that influence with that of Indian agents. It was thought by Indian officials that Indian leaders were largely responsible for resisting the new way because they feared for their power and influence. Hayter

Reed, the newly appointed Indian Commissioner, pointed out that the "tribal or communist system" must be "assailed in every possible way, and every effort made to implant a spirit of individual responsibility instead."[14]

Perhaps it should be taken into account that administrators of the nineteenth century were not aware of the implications to the fibre of a society of skimming off its leadership. It was an age that believed in education and experimentation with society as essential ingredients of progress. But the tone of self-assurance in determining what is best for others is chilling. There was also the consideration that without the influence of the chiefs on numerous occasions, the Police would not have been able to make arrests. The conscious removal of the chiefs had serious implications in the future for crime and the health of Indian society.

Once the Indians were safely on reserves and the Rebellion over, there were few voices to protest the coercive policy of assimilation. There was a tone of satisfaction in Dewdney's reports that the Indians by the late 1880s had finally taken on an aura of "tranquility and subordination," year by year "becoming more fully alive to the benefits which they receive under the humane and wise policy of the Government."[15]

One of the most striking aspects of the Indian Affairs reports for this period is the smug satisfaction of officials that assimilation is the only possible solution for the Indian. There is a sense of excitement and missionary zeal in the reports that a great experiment is being attempted. The cultural assurance of these reports that the Indian can be remade through a conscious policy must qualify charges of racism against the framers of Indian policy. But these policy makers did seem blind to the enormous irony that assimilation could only be achieved through a rigid separation of races.

It became the duty of the Police to enforce this separation. Apartheid came to the Canadian West in 1882. It is usually thought that a policy of repression toward the Plains Indians was a result of the Rebellion. But this is not so; the Rebellion merely made the policy more blatant.

The idea of the pass system, a policy of not allowing Indians to leave the reserve without a pass from the Indian Agent, appears to have its origins in the Indian Department. Both the Police and the Indian officials had been concerned for some time about the possible repercussions resulting from Canadian Indians crossing the United States border in search of buffalo. Often these excursions had the real purpose of stealing horses or lifting enemy scalps. These forays caused the inevitable reprisals which were almost impossible for the Police to deal with since the border gave Indians on either side sanctuary from the law. So it was decided to discourage Indians from crossing the border by allowing only those with passes to enter the United States. In 1882 an order-in-council was introduced to discourage the frequent crossing of the border. Here was the rather innocuous beginning of a policy that later, in its full development, was clearly unlawful and ran counter to the treaty promises of no restrictions on Indian movement.[16]

In 1884 Commissioner Irvine mentioned the pass system in his annual report, this time in response to the suggestion of Lawrence Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, that such a system would prevent Indians from leaving reserves and camping indiscriminately in the vicinity of white settlements. Irvine, though concerned about the potential problems of unsupervised Indians around towns, was more worried, at this point, with the legal implications.

> I pointed out that the introduction of such a system would be tantamount to a breach of confidence with the Indians generally, inasmuch as from the outset the Indians had been led to believe that compulsory residence on reservations would not be required of them, and that they would be at liberty to travel about for legitimate hunting and trading purposes. This concession largely contributed to the satisfactory conclusion of the treaty with the Blackfoot . . . .[17]

Nothing more seems to have come of the pass system prior to the Rebellion. Irvine, being more fair minded and having a greater sympathy for the Indians than did his successor, Lawrence Herchmer, appears to have made little use of the policy.[18] But the Rebellion brought the pass system to life with a jolt. The attitude of the Indian Department toward the Rebellion seemed to be one of admitting no blame and, at the same time, increasing control over Indians. The policy was spelled out in a list of recommendations from Vankoughnet to Macdonald in August 1885, on the "future management" of the Indians. Indians who had taken no part in the Rebellion were to be treated as before while rebel bands were to be broken up and chiefs deposed. Ammunition was to be strictly regulated. But where all Indians were to feel the tightening of Indian policy, whether they had been in the Rebellion or not, was in the pass system, "a system necessary for the Indians' own good and morality." There would be no restriction on passes to "well conducted" Indians, but no passes should be given to Indians who wished to camp near towns unless they could show good cause.

Scribbled in the margin of this document is the following reply, the official sanction of what was perhaps the first major breach of faith with the Plains Indians, and signed with the initials J.A.M.D. — Sir John A. Macdonald.

> Mr. Dewdney thinks the pass system could be generally introduced safely. If so it is in the highest degree desirable. As to the disloyal Bands this should be carried out in consequence of their disloyalty. The system should be introduced in the loyal Bands as well and the advantage of the change pressed on them. But no punishment for breaking bounds could be inflicted and in the case of resistance on the grounds of Treaty rights should not be insisted on.

Vankoughnet got around the slight quibble of treaty rights by pointing out that the rebel Indians had violated their treaty stipulations, a most dubious argument, even if it had had substance of truth, on which to base the denial of basic human rights to all Indians of the Canadian plains. Vankoughnet continued his twisted logic with the observation that hunting Indians should be allowed to go where they wished, as long as they did not encroach on white property, but towns and villages could be considered as owned by municipalities and therefore could be considered to be property from which Indians, by treaty, were prohibited from entering without permission.[19] Not only is this one of the more blatantly racist statements to come out of the Indian Affairs files, it is particularly stupid. The presence of undesirable Indians in towns was already being dealt with by the Police in a much simpler, fairer and realistic way through the all-encompassing Vagrancy Act. In most cases the statements of the Indian Affairs Department were straightforward; this is one of the few examples of pure deceit.

Why did the Indians put up with all this? Did they know the passes were illegal? The answers are not clear from the documents. It appears that throughout most of this early period of contact most Indians held the Police in considerable awe and rarely questioned their orders. The Indians maintained until at least the twentieth century a large credulity toward Police law. But there was another very good reason to submit to this policy, the same reason that many Indian parents sent their children to schools. If Indians ignored the pass system they would be deprived by Indian agents of their rations "and other similar privileges." A.E. Forget, the Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs, made the policy clear in a note to the Commissioner of the Police. Though the pass system was a rule, not a law, it could still be enforced by withdrawing "privileges" from Indians or by bringing some of those who ignored it before the courts under the Vagrancy Act. "I believe if a few examples were made it would tend, in great measure, to keep the Indians on their Reserves."[20]

It is clear that by the end of the 1880s most of the Police qualms about the system, at least at an official level, had evaporated. Gone from reports is the note of anxiety found in the period around 1885 that the Indians must be treated gently and with some precaution. Compulsion increasingly becomes the solution.

Because settlers were increasingly complaining of trespass, there developed a closer supervision of passes and a clearer differentiation between working and hunting passes. The Police thought that the feeling against Indians was so strong among many settlers that there was sure to be trouble unless the movement of Indians was very effectively controlled.[21] The Police became even more determined to restrict the movement of Indians in 1892, when the easing of the Territorial liquor laws caused an increase in anti-Indian hysteria among the settlers.

Is there any justification for what amounted to a policy of apartheid? Was there a sound reason for not honouring the treaties? The sad fact is that by the 1890s there was a reason, certainly from the Police perspective, for enforcing a separation between races. By the 1890s the Indians had the choice of capitulating to reservation life or of shirking agricultural duties and living like scavengers off the reserve, finding occasional game and dead cattle, or begging, stealing and killing cattle. The Indian off the reserve had become an automatic threat to the settlers. The Indians in the towns often encountered the worst element of white society and appeared eager to pick up their habits. Certainly the Indian Department, because of this, thought that its moral responsibility to segregate Indians transcended treaty obligations.[22]

It is hardly surprising that there was some resistance to the government's Indian policy. Much of this resistance centred on food. The worst cases of defiance toward the Police before the Rebellion involved rations, and the question of rations continued after the Rebellion to be a sore point. Many Indians, too, continued their attempts to break loose from the suffocating zeal of Indian policy by making horse stealing raids, usually into the United States, or by going on cattle killing excursions.

The question of rations became particularly intense in Treaty Seven. In contrast to the usually optimistic reports of the Indian Department about agricultural progress in Treaty Four and Treaty Six, those from Treaty Seven often indicated partial or total crop failure. In this atmosphere there is an ominous ring to reports that rations were being reduced to compel Indians to take farming more seriously.[23] The government had a problem, one which seemed to have no ready solution. It could not justify a policy of outright charity to Treaty Seven, yet, by its own admission, there were major agricultural problems in that Treaty.

The situation came to a head in the mid-1890s. A group of Blood Indians finally went to the Mounted Police at Fort Macleod, admitted that they were killing cattle, but stressed the necessity of doing so because their rations had been cut by the Indian Department, leaving them half-starving.[24] When the Commissioner of the Mounted Police brought these complaints to the attention of the Indian Affairs Department, there was an immediate response. This Mounted Police interference in Indian Affairs policy set off a minor explosion in relations between the Police and the Indian Affairs Department which had been simmering below the surface for years. The Blood agent accused the Police of listening to the "groundless complaints of unreliable Indians," even though the Chief of the Bloods, Red Crow, and a number of Blood chiefs had led the delegation to the Police. The official investigation by the Indian Department concluded that the Indians were killing cattle out of "pure devilment" and were better fed than the Mounted Police.[25] The Inspector of Indian Agencies, Thomas Wadsworth, was prepared to disprove the allegations that the Indians looked thinner because of insufficient food by sending east the photos of about fifty Indians "taken promiscuously."[26]

The attitude of the Indian Department prompted the Commissioner of the Mounted Police to send a plea to the Lieutenant-Governor:

> You are aware, Sir, that outside the rations actually issued by the Government to the Bloods, they have absolutely no lawful means of support; there is positively no game in the district, and unless the Government rations are sufficient to sustain life, the Indians must resort to cattle killing for subsistance, as even if they would work, there is very little available. The temptation to kill cattle grazing on the Reserve for which the Indians receive no compensation from the owners thereof, is very great ... the peace and safety of these Territories have been placed in my charge, and as these hinge in a very great measure on the Indian question, I think it is my duty to report whenever in my opinion the Indians have been badly treated.[27]

In the decade after the Rebellion the Police were constantly concerned that the reservation policy would cause outbreaks of hostility among the

Indians, but almost all the Police reports for this period convey a sense of calm. There were occasional moments of hysteria among settlers if an Indian happened to do anything untoward, but these outbursts were minimal because of the pass system. In 1890 there was a momentary scare when the Ghost Dance religion, which culminated in the Wounded Knee Massacre, reached its peak among the American Plains Indians. A flurry of Police and Indian Department enquiries revealed nothing out of the ordinary and the reassuring information came from the Battleford area that the Indians there were not performing the Ghost Dance; they were instead, "going in for the cotillion, eight hand reels and quadrilles."[28]

The Indians continued to be generally law-abiding. The Police crime statistics after 1885 show very clearly the same pattern as before 1885; the Indian crime rate was dramatically lower than that of the white population. Almost all of the Police monthly reports contain the boring refrain "no Indian crime." The Indian Department was able to announce in 1891 that Indian crime was almost non-existent except in Treaty Seven, partly due to the Police policy of hiring Indian scouts on the reserves.[29] In the area of white crime in 1891, an otherwise drab year was brightened by the larceny of a log house.[30]

By the middle of the 1890s a relative calm existed on the Canadian plains. The anxieties of the settlers concerning Indians were largely dispelled. There were still the occasional rumours of an Indian outbreak as happened, for instance, when a settler in the Treaty Seven area reported the theft of a cake. Almost immediately another rumour swept the area, involving Indians and the alleged theft of gingerbread.[31] But the Police were soon able to soothe most fears. The sad truth is that there was very little friction between settlers and Indians because there was so little contact between them. The pass system guaranteed peace. The human rights of the Indians, as well as the treaty promises, were sacrificed in deference to the success of the National Policy.

The pass system also guaranteed that Indians would remain corralled on reserves. As they soon became aware of the bitter reality of the post-treaty age, their relations with the Police changed. In an atmosphere of hunger, crop failure and decreasing population, they were suddenly overwhelmed by the fatal impact of the reservation system, by the Government's systematic destruction of everything they had believed in for millenia. They felt duped and increasingly lashed out with impotent frustration at the inevitability of their situation. The Police, for their part, found it increasingly difficult to admire the new Indian. Because of this, and because the Indians after 1885 were no longer a major threat, the Police began treating them with more coercion and less understanding. This atmosphere was bound to cause trouble. It is surprising that there was no major case of Indian hostility toward the Police for a decade after the Rebellion. But when it came, it came with a vengeance.

The tenuous harmony between Indians and Police was suddenly shattered in 1895. The Police had now been in the West for more than two decades and there had been only one policeman shot in the line of duty.[32] This record was to change dramatically between 1895 and 1897 as two Indians, Charcoal and Almighty Voice, between them killed five policemen. In neither case is it clear that either Indian held any special animosity for the Mounted Police, but five policemen, of course, were just as dead.

The case of Almighty Voice is especially illuminating for the study of Indian relations with both the Mounted Police and the Indian Affairs Department. An attempt to discover possible motives for his actions uncovers many scattered bits of information in the Police and Indian Affairs files which give a shocking picture of the state of Indian relations after the Rebellion.

There has been much sensational nonsense written about Almighty Voice, the usual story being that he was arrested for killing a cow which he thought belonged to his father. When in jail, his Police guard allegedly told him as a joke that he was to hang for the offence, so, after escaping, he vowed he would never be captured alive since he believed his guard.[33] Thus began what ended as a most impressive collection of dead and wounded pursuers, for Almighty Voice was a crack shot.

If the story is taken back a few years it becomes less dramatic, but more believable. Almighty Voice was the grandson of Chief One Arrow, whose reserve was situated just east of Batoche. One Arrow's name was prominent in Police and Indian Affairs records for two reasons; he was the first Indian to join Riel in rebellion and his reserve was consistently described by Indian officials as the most unprogressive in Treaty Six.

The Police appear to have first taken special notice of Chief One Arrow in 1880 when he was arrested with Chiefs Beardy and Cut Nose for killing government cattle. Chief One Arrow appeared to be annoyed by his arrest; he called on his followers to shoot the Police and many shots were fired by a large group of very unhappy Indians over the heads of the twenty Police required to make the arrest.[34] These three chiefs were not convicted by the jury who heard the case because of sympathy for their situation. Instead, they were given a severe reprimand and, according to the Indian Department, learned a lesson.[35]

The lesson of the next few years was that they would be given beef only if they worked. As has already been seen, this was not a policy with a guaranteed popularity among the Indians; it appears to have been least popular among One Arrow's followers.

It was decided after the Rebellion had been squelched that continued reform of One Arrow's band could best be achieved by getting rid of it. The Indian Agent responsible for the One Arrow Band, J.M. Rae, was certainly not prepared to jump to the defence of that band and excuse their indiscretions during the Rebellion. In response to charges that his Indians had joined Riel because they were starving, he stated that they got more food than the treaties stipulated and any hunger was due to improvidence.

> If there has been any fault to find in the management it is that the Indians have been too well treated. Now that the rising has assumed such magnitude, the only thing left to do is to shoot the Chiefs, Headmen and other leaders, disarm all the others and make it an offence to be off their Reserve.[36]

It seems that Agent Rae may not have been the very best choice to lead One Arrow's band toward a post-Rebellion concord with the Government.

It is at this point that the Police became involved with the One Arrow band because of a complaint of a Catholic priest that the Indians were being mistreated.[37] Inspector Cuthbert, who was sent to investigate, reported that the condition of the Indians on the One Arrow reserve was worse than anything he had seen. "Their state it would be hard to exaggerate." Some were near starvation and, in the middle of winter, almost without clothes. Cuthbert had distributed ten pounds of sugar, five pounds of tea, six pounds of tobacco and five condemned Police overcoats. The Indians were living, apparently, mainly on gophers and rabbits.[38]

The Indian Department was furious, accusing the Police of interference and of rewarding Indians for disloyalty. The Police retorted that the suffering of the One Arrow Indians was notorious and accused the Indian Department of sheer inhumanity.

The Indian Department did have the sense to realize, finally, that Agent Rae was not their best choice to coax the One Arrow band toward agricultural progress. His services were found unsatisfactory by the inspector of Indian reserves, L.W. Herchmer, in 1886, and he was replaced by R.S. McKenzie. An investigation by the Department in 1887 uncovered a huge number of errors in bookkeeping and many irregularities bordering on petty dishonesty, such as the illegal drawing of rations and inflated travelling allowances. There were endless errors in the ration list. The investigator reported that the farm instructor would not live on the reserve so there was no one to help the Indians with their farming. The Indians seemed in a most disgruntled mood, spending much of their time drumming and dancing, mostly the rain dance. He also reported that there had been a lot of rain lately.[39]

It was in this atmosphere of compulsion and malaise that Almighty Voice shot a cow. It was not, as the legend would have you believe, a naive act. On 22 October 1895, Almighty Voice and Flying Sound were arrested for killing a cow belonging to a settler near the Mannechinas Hills, not, as so often stated, one belonging to his father.[40] Four days previously his father, John Sounding Sky, had been sentenced to six months with hard labour for stealing a coat and some money, an act that is difficult to synchronize with his son's epic last stand which followed.[41]

On 29 October, a week after he was arrested, Almighty Voice escaped from Police custody.[42] It has often been stated that he was determined to escape because the Police guard told him he was going to be hanged.[43] The story is possible, but there appears to be no verification for it. Even if his guard had told him this as a joke, it is somewhat doubtful that he would have believed him. The Sounding Sky family were no strangers to the law and certainly Almighty Voice's actions in evading the law for more than a year and a half after his escape demonstrated that he was no mental defective. It is more plausible to argue that Almighty Voice feared jail because his grandfather, Chief One Arrow, when jailed for his part in the Rebellion, had become ill and never recovered. Many Indians had an extreme fear of imprisonment, believing that a loss of freedom could lead to illness and death.

A Police party consisting of Sergeant C.C. Colebrook and François Dumont, an interpreter, set out at once to recapture Almighty Voice. He was traced to his reserve, where he had fled to get a gun, and was soon cornered near Kinistino. As Colebrook went forward to make an arrest, he was warned by Almighty Voice to keep away or he would shoot, a message that was translated by Dumont. Colebrook ignored the warning, as had countless Police before him in similar situations, and when he was about fifteen feet from him, Almighty Voice shot him through the neck. He died almost instantly.[44]

One of the most extensive manhunts in Police history now began. Almighty Voice vanished for more than a year and a half and all the Police efforts to find him seemed fruitless. This was the case because Almighty Voice had the sympathy of the surrounding Indians who shielded him from Police pursuit.

A year later, when the Police became involved in yet another massive hunt for Charcoal, they must have thought they had lost their touch as he too evaded the Police with seeming ease. They were forced to realize that in the case of Indians they often got their man only through Indian help or information.

The lack of success in finding any trace of Almighty Voice through 1896 and early 1897 worried the Police not just because it showed Indian sympathy for him; the Police were determined that he must be captured because they feared similar actions from other Indians if he was not caught and punished. Their fear showed how little they still trusted the Indians.

An enormous Police file on the search for Almighty Voice provides evidence of their determination. Their reputation was at stake and they were driven by the Police creed that no murder must ever go unpunished, especially if committed by an Indian. The Rebellion was still fresh in in their minds.

Eventually, in May 1897, Almighty Voice and two companions were discovered near Batoche and were surrounded in a small clump of scrub poplar. It was decided to wait for reinforcements after the initial rush of the Police on the Indian position resulted in two men wounded. An attempt to set fire to the bush was equally unsuccessful.

The next attempt to rush the Indians, once reinforcements had arrived, had no luck at all and two Police and one civilian were killed. So it was decided to wait for still more reinforcements and to form a ring around the poplar clump where the Indians had now dug a rifle pit.

By the next evening the grove was surrounded by a small army. The Police and civilians who had ringed the grove of trees on the night of the 28th were reinforced by a contingent of twenty-four Police under Inspector Macdonell and Assistant Commissioner McIllree. They had brought with them a nine-pound gun to add to the seven-pound brass gun which had already been brought from Prince Albert. A cold night was spent by this force, ringed in closely around the bluff. There were many alarms through the night and considerable firing. The most haunting aspect of this scene was the chanting a short distance away of Almighty Voice's mother, Spotted Calf, the daughter of Chief One Arrow. She urged her son to remember the bravery of his grandfather and together they sang his death song. It was discovered the next morning that, despite their vigilance, Almighty Voice, obviously wounded, had crawled past the Police in the night and then returned to his rifle pit. A trail of blood led to a crutch and his blood-soaked moccasin.[45] This act will always remain a mystery.

At six o'clock the next morning the two heavy guns were brought into play and continued firing for about an hour. The Indians had first been given an opportunity to surrender, a proposal that was answered with taunts. The bluff was raked with cross fire which sent poplars hurtling into the air. Constable Smith, in charge of the heavy guns, was "making most excellent practice" on the seven-pounder, according to McIllree, "but at the twenty-fifth shot the bolts came loose and the gun jumped some distance in the air."[46] "He had better luck with the 9pr., shells and case shot tearing through the bluff in great style."[47] Smith, too, was pleased. He reported that the whole exercise was most successful except that the breast collars for the lead horses were not suitable for an extended trip. He spoke well of his crew, considering their limited practice, and hoped they could be better drilled for a future occasion.[48]

When the barrage from the large guns stopped, the pressure mounted for another charge on the Indians. McIllree tried to prevent this, not wishing to risk any more lives, but finally capitulated because he thought the civilians would not obey his orders anyway. A rush was made on the gun pit and to everyone's satisfaction it was discovered that the Indians had been effectively blown up.[49]

It is somehow fitting that this last dramatic gesture of defiance of the Canadian Indian took place in a clump of scrub poplar that would not burn. It is not clear that Almighty Voice can be endowed with heroic proportions; yet his last hours, surrounded by those who had changed his world, did take on epic proportions and gave him a stature which transcended the sordid surroundings which had promoted his challenge. His was the ultimate defiance; he had eluded capture for over eighteen months and killed four people — all without a pass from his agent.

Almighty Voice, in his last moments, does become a symbol for his people, a symbol of a once proud race hurling futile defiance at the government's attempts to recycle them into wards of the State. It is hard to endow Almighty Voice with nobility, but he did, at the end, epitomize the Indian protest against the inevitability of the new era, against the coercion of the Police and the Indian Department, against the systematic destruction of Indian culture. He embodied the Indian longing, before the old memories were snuffed, "to rage against the dying of the light."

NOTES

1 See R.C. Macleod, *The North West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 143-61.

2 See John Jennings, "The Plains Indian and the Law," in Hugh A. Dempsey, *Men in Scarlet* (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1974).

3 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, Indian Affairs Report, 1879, p. 2. Edgar Dewdney was appointed Indian Commissioner for the North-West Territories that year, taking over the position from David Laird. When the Government was later criticized for starving Indians through its work for food policy, Dewdney's answer was that it

should be remembered that hard-working taxpayers are paying for these Indians to live in idleness. Ibid., 1885, p. 141.

4 Ibid., 1880, p. 91. Annual report of Dewdney.

5 Ibid., 11.

6 There were four major incidents before 1885 of Indian hostility toward the Police over the issue of food; the Bull Elk incident on the Blackfoot Reserve in 1882, the arrest of the Sarcee Crow Collar and Chief Bull's Head in 1883, the assault on Craig at Poundmaker's Reserve in 1884, and an incident in 1884 at the Crooked Lakes Reserve near present day Broadview.

7 Indian Affairs Report, 1882, pp. X–XIII. See also Indian Affairs Report for 1881.

8 Ibid., 1889, pp. 169–70.

9 Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), Record Group (hereafter RG) (Mounted Police) 18, file 63, vol. 103. Inspector Constantine to Commissioner, 8 January 1895. Besides the obvious objections, the Indians objected to the white schools on the grounds that if the children learned the ways of the whites, they would go the the white heaven and thus be separated from their parents in the happy hunting grounds. Indian Affairs Report, 1888, p. 61.

10 Ibid., file 65, vol. 1037.

11 Ibid., file 665, vol. 112, 1895.

12 Ibid., file 106, vol. 1062, 29 November 1887.

13 Ibid., file 333, vol. 122. Superintendent Howe to Commissioner, 2 May 1896.

14 Indian Affairs Report, 1889, p. 165. Reed expressed his ultimate goal for the Indian in this report: "If the Indian is to become a source of profit to the country it is clear that he must be amalgamated with the white population. Before this can be done he must not only be trained to some occupation . . . but he must be imbued with the white man's spirit and impregnated by his ideas. The end in view in the policy adopted for the treatment of our wards is to lead them step by step, to provide for their own requirements ... and to inculcate a spirit of self-reliance and independence which will fit them for enfranchisement and the enjoyment of all the privileges, as well as the responsibilities, of citizenship."

15 Indian Affairs Report, 1886, p. IX; 1887, p. 188; 1888, p. IX; 1891, p. X.

16 Indian Affairs Report, 1882, pp. X–XI.

17 Ibid., 1884, p. 6.

18 PAC, RG 18, file 1262, vol. 1016.

19 PAC, RG 10, (Indian Affairs) file 19, 550–1, vol. 3709.

20 Ibid., file 134, vol. 1100. Forget to L.W. Herchmer, 20 September 1888. A typical pass issued by the Indian Affairs Department stated the length of time an Indian could be off the reserve, the reason for being away from the reserve and whether or not the Indian was allowed to carry a gun.

21 Ibid., file 132, vol. 1101.

22 Macleod, *North West Mounted Police*, 172. By the 1890s this separation of cultures is evident in the photographs of the period. In the 1870s and 1880s it appears that many whites wanted their pictures taken with an Indian in native dress. Many of the early pictures indicate a relaxed friendliness between races. After 1890 it is very difficult to find a photograph of Indians and whites mixing on the Canadian plains.

23 Indian Affairs Report, 1886, pp. 138–39. Report of Agent Begg at the Blackfoot Agency; 1891, p. 190, Report of Hayter Reed, who stated that the great bulk of the assistance in food was going to Treaty Seven. The other areas needed very little; 1892, p. XII, p. 47.

24 PAC, RG 18, file 38, vol. 101 (1895). Superintendent Steele to Commissioner of Mounted Police, 9 June 1894.

25 PAC, RG 18, file 38, vol. 101 (1894). Report of T.P. Wadsworth to Indian Department, 27 July 1894.

26 PAC, RG 10, file 443, vol. 3894. Wadsworth to Forget, 23 July 1894.

27 PAC, RG 18, file 38, vol. 101, 27 August 1894.

28 PAC, RG 18, file 35, vol. 101.

29 Indian Affairs Report, 1891, pp. 197–98.

30 PAC, RG 18, file 140, vol. 49.

31 PAC, RG 18, file 121, vol. 1302.

32 Constable Marmaduke Graburn in 1879.

33 See, for instance, Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, *Redman Echoes* (Los Angeles: Wiggins Trade School, 1933), 170–81. The latest in the Almighty Voice legend is the movie Alien Thunder which rivals the recent television special on Louis Riel for distortion.

34 PAC, RG 10, file 22,685, vol. 3719. There were about 150 Indians confronting the Police.

35 Indian Affairs, 1880, p. 86.

36 PAC, RG 10, file 1130–1A, vol. 3584. Rae to Dewdney, 18 May 1885.

37 PAC, RG 18, file 68, vol. 1038. Inspector Cuthbert to Superintendent Perry, 20 January 1886; RG 10, file 1411, vol. 3598.

38 Ibid., 20 January and 10 February 1886.

39 PAC, RG 10, file 41,783–1, vol. 3785. Report of Indian Inspector Wadsworth, 1887.

40 Ibid., vol. 8618. McKenzie to Indian Commissioner, 12 November 1895. Flying Sound was released on a suspended sentence because he admitted that he and Almighty Voice had killed the cow, but said he was led into it by Almighty Voice. Agent McKenzie later stated that Almighty Voice had offered to give the owner of the dead cow a horse in return. RG 18, file 226, vol. 1347.

41 Ibid., John Sounding Sky was married to Chief One Arrow's daughter. The Sounding Sky family was described by Agent McKenzie as bad and "getting worse."

42 Ibid., vol. 1607, p. 170.

43 RCMP *Quarterly* 23, no. 1.

44 Ibid.

45 Police Report, 1897, p. 24.

46 Ibid.

47 PAC, RG 18, vol. 2480. Crime Reports, McIllree to Commissioner, 4 June 1897.

48 Ibid., vol. 1398. Report of Constable F. Smith, 1 June 1897.

49 Ibid., vol. 2480. McIllree to Commissioner, 4 June 1897.

The Origins of the Treaty Rights Movement in Saskatchewan

John L. Tobias

Treaty rights is a political concept which has been associated with the Indian rights movement in Saskatchewan for the past eighty years. As presented over the past half century, it would appear to have had its origin at the time the treaties were first made, or at least with the Plains Cree and Saulteaux leaders who first made treaty. However, on closer examination, one finds that the concept of treaty rights is a twentieth century phenomenon and was first enunciated by Indian peoples in Saskatchewan some eighty years ago. It was developed and espoused initially as a defence mechanism against Canada's Indian policy and the Indian Act, which were designed to destroy the cultural identity of the Plains Cree and Plains Saulteaux. Over the past seventy-five years the idea of treaty rights has been embellished so that over the past two decades they have taken on a meaning that is quite distinct from that put forth by the originators of the movement. The treaty rights movement is, however, based upon a myth.

As presented over the past twenty years, treaty rights are said to be based upon the fact that the Indian peoples who made the treaties attribute to these instruments the character of sacred and inviolable documents which confer upon the Cree and Saulteaux peoples of Saskatchewan certain rights.[1] These rights can be grouped under such broad headings as the right to land, to hunt and fish, to receive annuities, and to education. This concept of treaty rights and the concept of the sacredness of the treaties have become a basis around which disparate Indian nations have been able to form political organizations. These concepts have also provided a vehicle for asserting, fostering and maintaining an Indian identity in the face of overwhelming pressure to assimilate the Indian.

Rather than regarding the treaties as sacred and inviolable, the Cree and Saulteaux leaders who made the treaties believed the treaties could be renegotiated or changed as circumstances warranted. In fact, during the first decade after the making of Treaties Four and Six (the Qu'Appelle and Carlton and Pitt treaties), the Cree and Saulteaux attempted on numerous occasions to remake, or have new treaties made. An examination of Cree and Saulteaux activities in these treaty areas makes clear that the Indian leaders regarded the treaties as similar to the annual agreements that these people had made with the Hudson's Bay Company.

The negotiations that took place at Qu'Appelle in 1874, and at Carlton and Pitt in 1876, used ceremonials and processes based on precedents established by the Indian nations and the Hudson's Bay Company over more than a century in dealing with one another. Only by ignoring the nature of the Cree and Saulteaux relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company, can one argue that the ceremonial involved in the making of

Treaties Four and Six was of a religious and sacred nature, and that the ceremonial made these instruments inviolable. However, if one views the ceremonials from the context of how these Indian peoples dealt with the Hudson's Bay Company, one sees that ceremonials leading up to the negotiations, and the manner in which the negotiations were conducted, were not all that different from those used by these Indian nations and the Hudson's Bay Company for more than a century when dealing with one another.[2] Moreover, the treaties were made at Hudson's Bay Company posts, using Hudson's Bay Company officials and interpreters.[3] The Cree and Saulteaux leaders who made the treaties, with few exceptions, had a good relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company. Those Cree leaders not close to the company were not present, and there is some evidence to suggest that they may not have been notified about the coming of the treaty commission.[4] Therefore it is difficult to see how the treaty makers would regard the treaties as different in nature from the arrangements made with the fur trading company.

One might argue that the subject matter of the treaty negotiations was different from that which the Indian leaders normally discussed with the Hudson's Bay Company; and that the underlying issue of survival of a way of life was different from that which was negotiated with the trading company. However, one can not ignore the fact that the manner in which the negotiations were conducted, and the tactics that the Indian leaders used in making the agreements were conducive to fostering their belief that the nature of the relationship and any agreements reached with the Government of Canada would be similar to the relationship and earlier agreements made with the trading company. The Cree were very much aware that the buffalo herds might not sustain them for many more years. They were aware too of Canada's claim to their lands, and feared that their lands would be stolen from them. This is why the Cree and Plains Saulteaux had pressured the Canadian authorities to deal with them concerning their future.[5] The Cree and Plains Saulteaux were wary of the government's intentions, and believing that Ottawa was as aware of Indian custom as the trading company, refused to accept any gifts for fear that in doing so, Ottawa might see acceptance of the proferred gifts as an agreement to surrender lands without negotiations.[6] In order to be certain that they understood what was being said to them, and that the government would understand what they wanted to say, the Carlton Cree hired their own interpreter, and threatened to withdraw from the treaty negotiations when the head of the treaty commission, Alexander Morris, said that they had no need for their own interpreter.[7]

The government initially offered the Cree and Plains Saulteaux a gift of fifteen dollars per person, a five dollar per person annuity, reservation of blocks of land for individual bands, the right to practice their old way of life on unsettled portions of land, and assistance in making the transition from a hunting to an agricultural economy, if these Indian people were to agree to surrender their lands to the government.[8] However, the Cree did not simply accept what was offered. Instead, they successfully negotiated greater quantities of tools, animals, and seeds than the government had initially offered. In so doing they followed the example of the Saulteaux of the Red River and North-West Angle regions. It was these Saulteaux people who forced the government in 1872 and 1873 to include tools and animals necessary to make the transition to agriculture easier.[9] The Cree were also following a tradition that had begun more than a century earlier when the Indian nations dealt with the Hudson's Bay Company. Just as the Hudson's Bay Company had to grant increasingly liberal terms to the more interior Indian nations than had been granted to those nations with whom the trading company first traded,[10] so did the Canadian government. This becomes quite clear when one compares Treaties One through Six, for with each set of negotiations and each successive treaty, except for Treaty Five, the Indian nations were able to negotiate more generous terms for themselves.

The one concession that the Cree were not able to extract from the government was the guarantee of their political and cultural autonomy. In fact, to receive the material benefits that the Canadian government was willing to concede, the Cree had to agree to submit to Canadian laws, and to have their leaders become officers of the Crown.[11] Only half the Cree nation was willing to take treaty under these conditions. Those people who looked to Loud Voice, Ahtahkakoop, Mistawasis, and Sweetgrass (all of whom had a close relationship to the trading company) for leadership, thought the impending economic crisis with the decline in the buffalo herds necessitated taking treaty. They wanted the assistance to make the transition to agriculture easier, for only in this way could Cree survival be assured. Besides, they believed that if the Cree did not take treaty, the Canadians would follow the example of the Americans and send the army to dispossess the Plains Indians.[12] These Cree leaders also appear to have assumed that their dealings with the Canadian authorities would be similar to the Cree dealings with the Hudson's Bay Company. Thus, they believed that what they were unable to negotiate one year could be negotiated in a subsequent year.

The Cree had the expectation that changes could be made, and new clauses added to the treaties. Only half the Cree nation had taken treaty, and those people who remained outside the treaty might be able to negotiate new terms, just as the interior bands had been able to do with the Hudson's Bay Company. In fact, this is what the non-treaty Cree and Plains Saulteaux in both the Treaty Four and Six areas attempted to do. Piapot and Cheekuk refused to recognize the agreement made at Qu'Appelle in 1874, and sought in 1875 to have blacksmith shops, trading posts, carpentry tools, medical aid, and numerous other items added to the treaty before they would sign.[13] Although these leaders were unsuccessful in getting these items included in the Qu'Appelle Treaty, in 1876 when Treaty Six was made, most of the requests Piapot and Cheekuk had made were repeated by the Saskatchewan Cree and included in the Carlton and Pitt treaty. Big Bear and Little Pine, who had not taken treaty in 1876 because they sought guarantees of Cree political and cultural autonomy, believed that the treaties could be renegotiated and attempted until 1885 to have the treaties modified.[14]

Ottawa seemed to reinforce the Cree impression that the treaties could be modified, and that the terms of newer treaties would be applied to those people who had already taken treaty. This was particularly true of the 1879–83 period when, as a result of the disappearance of the buffalo, all the Plains Indian nations were faced with starvation, Ottawa provided food to all the Cree and Saulteaux, not just to those in Treaty Six, which was the only treaty that stipulated that such aid would be given.[15] Food was also provided after 1881 to all those people who settled on reserves and began to farm, although only the Treaty Six people were promised such aid. This assistance was given, just as the Indian leaders requested, for a period longer than the three years the treaty stipulated.[16] Such action on the part of the government created the impression that the treaty arrangements were similar to the arrangements with the trading company, subject to negotiated modification and alteration, and that the terms were not immutable or inviolable.

None of the Cree leaders of the period 1876 to 1885 regarded the treaties as guaranteeing the Cree any rights, or providing them protection. In fact the reverse was the case for a significant portion of the Cree nation. Those who looked to Big Bear and Little Pine for leadership refused to take treaty because they saw the treaties as a means of subjecting the Cree to an external authority over which they had no control. This group, although cognizant of the impending economic crisis, and desirous of assistance in developing a new economic base, objected to the clauses in the treaties that subjected the Cree to Canadian law. They wanted guarantees of Cree autonomy. Throughout the period 1876 to 1885 they sought to renegotiate the treaties or make new ones that would provide such guarantees, but with no success.[17]

Canadian authorities were aware that the Cree regarded their agreements with Canada in the same fashion as their earlier alliances with the Hudson's Bay Company. Thus Lieutenant-Governors Alexander Morris and David Laird, Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney, and Governor-General Lorne all took great pains whenever the subject of the treaties was broached by Indian leaders to explain that they and the Canadian government were not acting as traders, and that they could not and would not modify the treaties to encompass the Cree demands for additional farming equipment, or Cree autonomy.[18] It was the Canadian officials who insisted that the treaties were inviolable and that no changes would be made.[19]

The Cree and Saulteaux leaders who signed the treaty met with Governor-General Lorne when he toured the West in 1881, and requested that the treaties be either renegotiated or repudiated and new ones made. Pahsung, who spoke on behalf of Loud Voice, said, "We can't live by the first treaty." He and Loud Voice both stressed that their people could not survive unless the treaty was modified. At Carlton, both Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop spoke about the treaty being inadequate and needing modification. What clearly emerges from Lorne's meetings with the Cree and Saulteaux treaty makers is that the Indian leaders believed the treaties to be inadequate for meeting the material needs of their people, and that the treaties could and should be modified.[20]

Lorne responded to the Indian leaders at Qu'Appelle by saying that he did not want to hear any more about the breaking of the treaties. "I am come here to hear what you have to say but not to make any changes in [the] treaties." He made a direct appeal to the chiefs, stating, "...I consider the chiefs as Officers of the Queen among the Indians and I hold them responsible for what the people say and do, ... As the chiefs on behalf of the people put their hands to a treaty seven years ago I expect them to keep it.''[21] He used words to a similar effect at Carlton. Despite such strong statements about the government not being willing to renegotiate or change the treaties, the Cree persisted in their endeavours to have changes made.

The Cree became all the more convinced that the treaties were inadequate when in 1884 Ottawa ordered a cutback and ultimate end to rationing the Plains Indians. This action brought increased interest among the Cree in the efforts of Big Bear, Piapot, and Little Pine to create an Indian territory which would concentrate the Cree and limit the ability of the government to control the Cree and to enable the Cree to maintain their autonomy. Cree bands and leaders who had formerly held aloof from this movement began attending meetings at Qu'Appelle, Battleford and Duck Lake to discuss how to achieve this goal. As a result, a condition existed in the North-West that some have seen fit to call the ''Cree Rebellion of 1884.''[22]

The widespread support that Big Bear and Little Pine were gaining in 1884 convinced the new Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, Edgar Dewdney, that a serious crisis was at hand. Dewdney and Hayter Reed, Assistant Indian Commissioner, believed that if Big Bear were successful, in 1885 the Cree would put forth a united demand to make a new treaty that would guarantee Cree autonomy.[23] Dewdney and Reed considered the use of various tactics to destroy this movement, and when the opportunity presented itself to use the troops sent into the North-West to suppress the Métis Rebellion, they used the militia units to crush the treaty revision movement.[24]

In the two decades that followed 1885, the Cree experienced what Big Bear and Little Pine feared would happen if Cree political and cultural autonomy were not protected. Ottawa used the opportunity presented by the presence of troops and an expanded North West Mounted Police Force to intimidate the Cree and to destroy the last vestiges of Cree autonomy. Horses and guns were confiscated, depriving the Cree of their mobility and their ability to resist. By 1890 the men who had led the movement for Cree autonomy were either dead, or imprisoned and died soon after. Bands which had been particularly troublesome, such as Big Bear's and Lucky Man's, were broken up, or as in the case of Foremost Man in the Maple Creek area, ignored and deprived of all treaty entitlement. A pass system was introduced to prevent the Cree leaving their reserves without the permission of the Indian Agent. This last action was taken to prevent any future revival of the movement to revise the treaties. As the Cree leaders who made treaty died, bands were not allowed to select new leaders. Ottawa was determined that the Cree and Plains Saulteaux were to be kept without leaders until such time as the Cree political and cultural traditions were eradicated. In short, Ottawa implemented the policy that the Indian Act was designed to achieve, and which Hayter Reed called the policy of ''de-tribalization.''[25]

The goal of the ''de-tribalization policy'' was to make the Cree into docile Christian peasants on the model of the eastern European peasantry.[26] A start was made in achieving the goal of the destruction of Cree culture by banning the "Thirst Dance" and the traditional Cree religious ceremonials. What followed was a ban on all Indian dances (including those copied from non-Indians), and on Indian ceremonials even if they had no traditional religious significance.[27] To discourage the traditional aboriginal economic activity, the Cree were made subject to the territorial game laws.[28] Children were removed from the reserves and sent to boarding and industrial schools where they were not allowed to speak their native language or practice any of their traditional culture. In fact they were taught to be ashamed of their heritage and their parents' culture.[29] The adults experienced a subdivision of their reserves into forty-acre parcels, which were then allotted to individual families. The allotments were scattered all over the reserves, at sizeable distances from one another. The purpose of the subdivision was to break up the village that had been the basis of Cree social organization. As well, this policy was introduced as a means of preventing the Cree from farming cooperatively and sharing their produce. It was meant to undermine any communal economic activity, and "to inculcate and foster a spirit of individuality."[30]

The intent of the de-tribalization policy was to atomize Cree society. The individual Indian was to be made over into an autonomous independent economic unit, believing in private property and repudiating any aspiration to communal ownership or communal economic activity. To make clear that the model and goal were a non-communal preindustrial peasantry, Ottawa insisted that those bands that had pooled their resources and purchased farm machinery prior to 1895 should be forbidden to make use of it. The Cree were to be "self-supporting when left to their own resources" on farmsteads of two to three acres. This was said to be a goal accomplished "by peasants of various countries, with no better implements than the hoe, rake, cradle, sickle, and flail."[31]

The Cree were to be kept leaderless, and were not to be able to use any group or person as spokesman with the non-Indian authorities. Thus chiefs and councils disappeared on most reserves by 1900. Ottawa wanted the government farm instructor, or the Indian Agent, to be the only person to whom the individual Indian should look in the position of leader or spokesman. At no time was the agent or farm instructor to deal with any organized faction or group; he was to deal only with individuals.[32] As Canada's Indian policy was implemented on Plains Cree reserves, it was made clear that the reserves were devices for assimilation, and that Ottawa did not recognize Cree rights or autonomy. The government conceived its relationship with the Cree to be analogous to a trust relationship, with the Indian as the government's ward, and as long as the Cree property was protected, the government was free to direct the ward as it saw fit. The Cree were thought to be powerless to resist the policies the government imposed.

Cree resistance to Ottawa's policy was limited to the few reserves in Saskatchewan where some of the original treaty makers still survived. After the beginning of the twentieth century, on these reserves the traditional ceremonials were still secretly held, and a form of non-cooperation and passive resistance was practiced. However, non-cooperation only led to impoverishment.[33] In addition, these old treaty signers devised a tactic that would ultimately produce success in resisting government policy and in changing that policy. They came to the conclusion that certain promises were made to the Cree and Saulteaux that were now being broken. They developed the tactic of emphasizing the promises made to the Indian at the time the treaty was made.

In the Broadview, Qu'Appelle, File Hills and Touchwood Hills regions the old treaty signers remembered what the Treaty Commissioners had told them. Alexander Morris had promised them that the reserves were to be places where the Indian could continue to live as he had in the past if he so chose. What Morris offered on behalf of the Canadian government was to be in addition to what the Indian already had, not to supplant it. Governor-General Lorne had told the Cree and Saulteaux leaders in 1881 that the Queen would never break the promises made to them by the Canadian government.[34] The policy of de-tribalization being practiced was definitely contrary to the promises Morris and Lorne had made. The entire policy was designed to prevent the Cree living as they had in the past, and to supplant the old culture. These old men came to the conclusion that Ottawa was breaking the treaties that it had made with them.[35] From this realization was born the treaty rights movement.

By 1910 the old men from southern Saskatchewan, who had been present when the Qu'Appelle Treaty was made, began to hold a series of meetings on various reserves to discuss what was happening to their people. They were convinced that the treaty promises and therefore the treaty itself were being broken. In 1911 they sent a delegation to Ottawa to protest treaty violations that were occurring. They met with Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Frank Oliver, and presented their grievances. They protested the ban on Indian ceremonials, the removal of chiefs and councils, and the fact that Indians were not allowed to control what happened on the individual reserves. Oliver listened to the old men, denied that treaties were being violated, and attempted to break up the movement these men had begun before it became too strong.[36]

The old treaty signers failed in their effort to use the treaties as a means to end the de-tribalization policy. Nevertheless, their endeavour was very significant, for it was the first time that the Indian peoples of Saskatchewan made a presentation based upon the fact that the treaties provided them with certain guarantees and a measure of protection. All previous references to the treaties by the Plains Cree and Saulteaux had spoken about the inadequacy of the treaties and the need either to renegotiate them or make new ones. This 1911 delegation was the first to ask that the treaties be honoured and to stress that the treaties guaranteed the Indians the right to their own culture and their own leaders. In the years that followed this theme would be emphasized and built upon by subsequent generations of Saskatchewan Indian spokesmen. The rights the treaties were said to guarantee were expanded to include aboriginal economy, education, and medical care. During the war years of 1914 to 1918, and again in 1940 to 1944, the treaties were said to protect the Indian peoples from compulsory military service and taxation. In the past decade and a half the movement has taken on a character that appears to be closer to the goals that Big Bear and Little Pine were seeking to achieve than those of the founders of the movement, who merely sought to preserve the old Cree culture. Starting first with the demands for Indian self-government freed from the regulations that Indian Affairs set for band councils and government on the reserves, and the call for Indian control of Indian education, meaning not just the control of schools on the reserves, but extending to what the curriculum says about Indian people in the non-Indian schools, and claiming that the right to education and Indian control thereof extends into the post-secondary level, the movement is now calling for Indian self-government that has aspects of a subordinate nation-state, or more correctly many aspects of sovereignty. Above all what the Indian organizations on the prairies now emphasize is that the Indian nations should have autonomy within Canada.

Contemporary Cree leaders can make such claims because the treaty negotiators made extensive use of metaphors. These metaphors were used to explain very important abstract concepts, and are often difficult to interpret even if both parties were to speak the same language. However, when we recognize that the negotiations were held between peoples from two entirely different cultural backgrounds, and that each party would interpret the metaphors from their own cultural perspective, the basis for possible misunderstandings about the nature of the relationship that was being established is compounded. Although the two parties might think they have reached a common understanding, they have in reality two conflicting views of what was actually said or promised. An example will demonstrate how differing cultural interpretations of an abstract concept resulted in differing interpretations of the nature of the relationship that the treaty established.

In negotiating both Treaty Four and Treaty Six Alexander Morris made extensive use of the metaphors "Great Mother" to refer to the Queen, and of a parent to child relationship to refer to the nature of the relationship that the Government of Canada wanted to establish with the Plains Cree and Saulteaux. These metaphors have been interpreted by both the government and the courts to be similar, if not identical to a ward-guardian relationship. This was what Morris also says he intended by these metaphors.[37] Given the context of a middle class familial relationship in the mid-Victorian era, the metaphor was appropriately chosen to express the trust relationship that was intended by Ottawa — that the Indian was to be under the close supervision and control of the government. However, when viewed from the cultural context of the Cree, the relationship takes on a quite different character. A relationship analogous to a Cree familial relationship means that the child has a great deal of autonomy and liberty from his parents. He is largely free of parental control. However, when the child is in need of assistance the parent is obligated to provide such aid.[38] Thus by emphasizing the parent-child relationship, or trust relationship, the Cree can demand and claim that they have been guaranteed a good deal of political and cultural autonomy. At the same time, as the Cree lack the resources to achieve the goals of autonomy, they can demand or expect the government to assist them in achieving this goal. Thus by basing their claim on how the Indian would understand the metaphor of a parent-child relationship, or Great Mother, the contemporary Indian demand for autonomy can be said to be a treaty right, even though the original Cree treaty signers believed the treaties contained no such guarantees.

What complicates the task of trying to define and understand treaty rights is the fact that contemporary Indian leaders no longer interpret the treaties literally, as the originators of the treaty rights movement appear to have done. Instead, they interpret what was said at the negotiations and in the written treaties according to how they think their ancestors might have understood the metaphors, and what was said when the treaties were negotiated. Thus the emphasis is on the spirit of the treaties, and what the old people have to say about the significance of the ceremonial that few contemporary Indian people understand, and that fewer still are aware was used in dealing with non-Indians long before the treaties were made. Treaty rights for the contemporary Indian leaders has become a dynamic concept, one subject to interpretation according to what each generation thinks the treaty signers might have understood the metaphors to mean. Now that treaty rights have been enshrined in the constitution without definition, the obligation of the people of Canada to the Indian people with treaties is as dynamic and open to change as the Cree treaty signers thought it should be. Better yet, with the contemporary Indian leaders having apparently gained some sympathy for the idea of Indian autonomy, it appears that they might win recognition for a principle that Big Bear and Little Pine failed to achieve a century ago. There is a special irony in all this, for most contemporary Cree leaders still maintain that the treaties are inviolable documents.

NOTES

1 Richard Price, ed., *The Spirit of Alberta Indian Treaties* (Montréal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1980) conveys this myth of the sacredness of the treaties throughout many of the articles published in this collection.

2 A comparison of what Arthur J. Ray and Donald Freeman in their *'Give Us Good Measure': an economic analysis of relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company till 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 54–62 and John Foster, "Indian-White Relations in the Prairie West During the Fur Trade Period — A Compact," in Price, *Spirit of Alberta*, 181–200, say about the nature of the relationship of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Cree and the ceremonial that surrounded the renewal of the yearly alliance with what Alexander Morris describes in his *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories* (Toronto: Belford Clarke and Co., 1880), 77–123, and 168–239, makes very clear that what took place at Qu'Appelle, Carlton, and Pitt was not unique but based upon the precedent of these peoples' dealings with the Hudson's Bay Company.

3 Ibid.; see also Peter Erasmus, *Buffalo Days and Nights* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1976), 239–43.

4 Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers: A Narrative of Seven Years In the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company During 1867–1874 On the Great Buffalo Plains...* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913), *passim.*, explains the relationship of the Hudson's Bay Company with the various Cree and Saulteaux leaders of the Qu'Appelle

and Cypress Hills region. It is noteworthy that all those he mentions as good and loyal Indians for the Hudson's Bay Company were all those who were at Qu'Appelle to take treaty. Those such as Piapot and the Assiniboine who had a poor relationship with the trading companies were not present to make treaty. This can be accounted for by the fact that Pascal Breland who was sent to the Qu'Appelle District to inform the Indians of that District of the coming of the treaty delegation never went west of Crooked Lakes and had asked Loud Voice to inform the other Indian leaders of the arrival of the treaty commission. Public Archives of Canada, Record Group 10 Indian Affairs Files, vol. 3604, file 2543, Pascal Breland to Alexander Morris, 17 November 1873. [Hereafter cited as PAC, RG 10, vol., file, letter]. R. Allen, "Big Bear," *Saskatchewan History* 25 (1972): 1-17; and W.B. Fraser, "Big Bear: Indian Patriot," *Alberta Historical Review* 14 (1966): 1-13 make clear this leader's relationship to the company. John McDougall, *Opening the Great West: Experiences of a Missionary in 1875-1876* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1970), 52-56, explains that the treaty commission was delayed, and Big Bear and Little Pine had to go to the buffalo ranges for food.

5 Erasmus, *Buffalo Days*, 246-50; Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 169-71. See also PAC, RG 10, vol. 3576, file 378; vol. 3586, file 1137; vol. 3604, file 2543; vol. 3609, file 3229; vol. 3636, file 6694-1.

6 PAC, RG 10, vol. 3604, file 2543; Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 173-75.

7 Erasmus, *Buffalo Days*, 238.

8 Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 91-93; 203-9.

9 PAC, RG 10, vol. 3571, file 124-2; also vol. 3603, file 2036. John Taylor, "Canada's Northwest Indian Policy in the 1870's: Traditional Premises and Necessary Innovations," in Price, *Spirit of Alberta*, 3-7.

10 Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of the Hudson Bay 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,1974), 138-39; 195-98. Foster, "Indian-White Relations," 191-92.

11 Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 100; 206-7.

12 Erasmus, *Buffalo Days*, 246-50.

13 Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 85-87. More detailed information about the adhesions of the Cree and Saulteaux leaders in 1875 can be found in PAC, RG 10, vol, 3625, file 5489.

14 John L. Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885," *Canadian Historical Review* 64 (1983): 523-39.

15 G.F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), 267-84, explains the nature of Canada's assistance and that it went to all the Plains Indian nations.

16 Ibid.; PAC, RG 10, vol. 3656, file 9030; vol. 3655, file 9000.

17 Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation," 523–45.

18 Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 95 and 201. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3655, files 9000 and 9092; vol. 3656, file 9093; vol. 3670, file 10771; vol. 3704, file 17858; vol. 3768, file 33642. Department of Indian and Northern Development, Ottawa, file 1/1-11-3.

19 Ibid.

20 PAC, RG 10, vol. 3768, file 33642.

21 Ibid.

22 Campbell Innes, *The Cree Rebellion of 1884: Sidelights of Indian Conditions Subsequent to 1876* (Battleford: Battleford Historical Society, 1926). See also Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 267–84, and Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation," 537–39.

23 Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation," 539.

24 Ibid., 545–46. For a different interpretation of the government's use of troops against the Cree in 1885, see Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, 329–79.

25 For a discussion of the policy and intent behind the Indian Acts in the post 1876 period see, John L. Tobias, "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline History of Canada's Indian Policy," *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6 (1976): 13–30.

26 Canada, *Sessional Papers,* 53 Victoria, 1890, No. 12, p. 112. [Hereafter cited as CPS, 53 Victoria, 1890, no.,p.]. CSP, 55 Victoria, 1892, No. 14, p. 193. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3964, file 148,285.

27 PAC, RG 10, vol. 3761, file 32,248; vol. 3825, file 60511, vols. 1 and 2; vol. 6809, file 470-2-3, volume 11, part 4; *Statutes of Canada* 47 Victoria, Chapter 27, 1884; *Statutes of Canada*, 58/59 Victoria, Chapter 35, 1894; *Statutes of Canada*, 4/5 George V, Chapter 35, 1914.

28 PAC, RG 10, vol. 2378, file 77,020; vol. 2832, file 69,009; vol. 2446, file 93,503; vol. 2497, file 102,950; *Statutes of Canada*, 53 Victoria, chapter 29, 1890.

29 PAC, RG 10, vol. 3947, file 123,764-2; vol. 6808, file 470-2-3, vol. 11. *Statutes of Canada*, 57/58 Victoria, Chapter 32, 1894.

30 PAC, RG 10, vol. 3579, file 619, vol. 2; vol. 3811, file 55,152-1; vol. 3964, file 138,285; CSP, 50 Victoria, 1887, No. 6, pp. 108–9; 52 Victoria, 1889, No. 16, p. 128; 53 Victoria, 1890, No. 12, pp. 165–66; 56 Victoria, 1893, No. 14, p. 51.

31 PAC, RG 10, vol. 3847, file 82,250-4, parts 4 to 6; vol. 3806, file 52,332; vol. 3864, file 148,285.

32 PAC, RG 10, vol. 3584, files 1130 and 1130-1B; vol. 3671, file 10,836; vol. 3720, file 22,897; vol. 6809, file 470-2-3 vol. 11, part 4; vol. 3939, file 3941. CSP, 30 Victoria, 1887, No. 6, p. 109; 52 Victoria, 1889, No. 16, p. 128.

33 John L. Tobias, "Indian Reserves in Western Canada: Indian Homelands or Devices for Assimilation," in D.A. Muise, ed., *Approaches to Native History in Canada: papers of a conference held at the National Museum of Man, October 1975* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1977), 96–97.

34 Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 96–97, 120–21, 204–9. PAC, RG 10, vol. 3768, file 33642.

35 PAC, RG 10, vol. 4053, file 379,203–162; vol. 3939, file 121,698–98.

36 Ibid.

37 Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, 296.

38 David G. Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1979.)

More Than a Matter of Blood: The Federal Government, the Churches and the Mixed Blood Populations of the Yukon and the Mackenzie River Valley, 1890–1950

K.S. Coates and
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During the contemporary debates over Native rights in the Canadian North, the demands and even the existence of the mixed blood population have often passed unnoticed. The comparative invisibility of mixed blood claims originates, in part, in the organization and tactics of some regional aboriginal rights groups. The eloquence and radicalism of the Dene Nation of the Mackenzie Valley have forced a much lower profile on the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories, though the latter group has long argued for consideration of its peoples' aboriginal entitlement. In the Yukon, the submergence of mixed blood demands has been more total. The gradual absorption of non-status Native negotiations under the Council of Yukon Indians has clouded public awareness of mixed blood claims.[1]

Though they may lack political visibility, the mixed bloods constitute an important component of northern society. A dual racial heritage, separate legal and constitutional status from that of the Indians, and, in some cases, a distinctive community life have often set the mixed bloods clearly apart from status Indians and whites. The existence of the northern mixed blood people raises a variety of interesting and important questions about the social and racial origins of the group, their sense of identity and group cohesiveness, and the extent to which they are distinct from other aboriginal peoples in the North.

The contemporary claims process and the politicization of the North have forced labels — often inappropriate ones — on ethnic groups, or have created a common contemporary identification among people who are, historically, very different. Though for the purposes of negotiations the mixed bloods share a necessary unity, they are actually a very disparate group. They have been called many things: Métis, half-breeds, non-Natives, "borderline Indians," non-treaty, non-status and mixed bloods. The names mask the sharp regional variations in northern mixed blood populations. Several communities in the southern Mackenzie are clearly Métis, inheritors of the traditions of the "New Nation." Others, particularly in the northern Mackenzie Valley, are more properly non-status, consisting of people who, largely for administrative reasons and regardless of lifestyle, are no longer considered to be Indians.[2] In the Yukon, the various appellations are of even less utility. Though they may be genetically accurate, they convey only partial definitions, not cultural or social distinctions relevant among aboriginally-based populations.

Historians have abandoned earlier facile notions of genetics as the basis for Métis identity, looking instead at the nature of Métis culture and society. Moving beyond the figureheads of Cuthbert Grant, Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, studies by Foster, Sprague, Pannekoek, Brown and others have done a great deal toward shattering old notions of the Métis as a primitive, easily-led and backward-looking race.[3] In charting the emergence of mixed blood societies, the historians have described the crucial internal forces of language, economy, and social organization. They also correctly identify the important role of outside agents like the Roman Catholic Church and the North West Company in forging a group consciousness.

Among the more interesting recent developments has been the departure from the emphasis on the Métis of the Red River and Saskatchewan districts. John Foster's articles on the "country-born"— English Protestant mixed bloods of the western fur trade who followed a different cultural pattern than the Métis — illustrate the vital importance of broadening the investigation of mixed blood societies.[4] Similarly, studies by Peterson on the Métis of the Lake of the Woods area,[5] and Pollard on mixed bloods in the Pacific drainage region[6] have extended the framework for study over a much broader geographical area. To date, however, there has been little on the North or, more importantly, on those regions where mixed blood societies did not emerge as distinct social entities.[7]

Racial mixture was an integral part of European expansion. Yet, as John Foster points out,

> Throughout what is today Canada and the United States the process of *metissage* accompanied the fur trade. The presence of adult males isolated from their women-folk, as well as the concepts of "good manners" and "hospitality" of many Indian bands, ensured as much. In a few instances, a very few, Mixed Bloods were enculturated as whites. In only one region, the northwestern fringe of the Great Plains, did the Mixed Blood emerge as a distinct socio-cultural entity.[8]

Understandably, the unique evolution of the Métis has attracted its due attention. Equally, though, scholars must turn to areas where independent societies did not emerge from racial mixture. The Canadian North provides an excellent region for such a study, for a variety of patterns are clearly evident in the history of the Mackenzie River Valley and the Yukon River basin. In the North, as elsewhere in North America, genetics was not enough to foster a mixed blood community. It became quickly evident throughout the North that racial identification was more than a matter of blood.

If not blood, other factors have to account for the divergent social realities. There are, again, several explanations. The timing of fur trade expansion, white attitudes toward Natives, missionary activities, and the policies of the federal government help explain the different patterns of mixed blood development. This list is by no means exhaustive and, indeed, emphasizes the role of external agents in the evolution of mixed blood society. The northern situation provides substantial justification for this approach, but a caveat must be entered. This paper is a preliminary attempt to account for the divergent experience of the Yukon and Northwest Territories, and as such is concerned primarily with general social and economic forces. The identification and explanation of other, internal characteristics, such as Métis-Indian relations, residential patterns, kinship connections, and mixed blood aspirations, are not an explicit part of this study.[9]

The internal differences of the northern experience can be traced, in part, to a matter of timing. The fur trade, creator of the unique socio-economic order which in turn produced Métis societies in southern regions, spread slowly throughout the North. Timing proved to be crucial, for in the forty years between the opening of the southern Mackenzie to trade and the expansion of the Hudson's Bay Company into the Yukon, the structures and values of fur trade society had undergone some significant changes.

The southern Mackenzie was opened slowly after Alexander Mackenzie's epic 1789 journey to the Arctic Sea. As competition raged between the Montréal traders, especially the North West Company and Mackenzie's XY Company, and the London-based Hudson's Bay Company, traders pushed farther to the northwest, hoping to outstrip their rivals. Significantly, the establishment of fur trade posts in the region in the late 1790s and early 1800s occurred in an era when no stigma was attached to liaisons between fur traders and Indian women, and when marriages *à la façon du pays* were an accepted part of fur trade society.[10] This flexible attitude toward inter-racial relationships, particularly among the Montréal-based fur traders and their French-speaking, Roman Catholic voyageurs, was the foundation upon which the fur trade society of western Canada developed. The southern Mackenzie would, therefore, develop initially as a fragment of the southern society.

In such centres as Fort Smith, Fort Chipewyan, Fort Simpson and Fort Liard, the Métis formed an integral part of the community. As David Smith points out, many of these Métis came originally as employees of the early fur traders. These people carried the culture, values and personal identifications of the southern Métis; they spoke French, professed Roman Catholicism, and deemed themselves a distinct social group. The pattern did not always ensure a continuation of a distinctive Métis identity, and even on the general group level there were significant movements away from the classic Métis culture and traditions.[11] At Fort Resolution, some of the Métis married Chipewyan wives and became culturally indistinguishable from their Indian relatives. The fragment survived, however. Though attitudes towards mixed bloods would, by the early 1830s, begin to change, the Métis had at an early date been firmly established in the southern Mackenzie.

The same did not hold for the northern Mackenzie or the Yukon River valley. Here, fur trade expansion was delayed until the 1840s, coming at a time when attitudes among the fur trade élite toward mixed bloods and inter-racial relationships had hardened considerably. When George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, brought his white wife, Frances, to Red River in 1830, he not unwittingly threatened the widely accepted practice of fur traders taking Indian or mixed blood wives. The leadership offered by Simpson and others proved difficult to ignore; over the next two decades Indian and mixed blood women fell from favour as sexual partners and were gradually replaced by more socially acceptable white women. This change, which originated in the upper ranks of Red River society, filtered down over time throughout the Company's widely dispersed fur trade districts.

By the time the Hudson's Bay Company moved northward along the Mackenzie, the new attitudes were clearly evident. Informal social conventions now disparaged even short term liaisons with women of aboriginal descent. Robert Campbell, one of the Company's more noteworthy northern explorers, caught the prevailing attitude among the firm's upper ranks when he wrote, "It is too well known that few indeed of those joined to the ebony and half-ebony damsels of the north are happy or anything like it; and that few or none of them have pleasure, comfort or satisfaction of their families."[12] The prevalence of such attitudes through the 1840s and 1850s encouraged Company traders to forsake open relations with Native women. Importantly, these new values came into effect just as the forts of the North — Fort McPherson (1840), Fort Youcon (1847), and Fort Selkirk (1848) — were opened.[13]

Because of timing and isolated location, two elements central to the establishment of a mixed blood society were missing. There were few inducements to permanent settlement in the far northwest. Early Métis remained permanently at the post settlements in the southern Mackenzie where there was considerable work to be found with the trading and, later, transportation companies. In contrast, few of the Red River Métis dispatched to the northern periphery chose to remain there when their contracts expired. In addition, the disapproval of mixed blood relations ensured that, unlike the post societies of the earlier and southern fur trades, mixed bloods would not be closely identified with the officer class and would have little direct *entrée* into the closed and hierarchical social system of the Company posts.

Alexander Hunter Murray symbolized the new tradition. When Murray arrived in 1846 to establish a trading post on the recently discovered "Youcon" river, he brought his white wife with him. Mrs. Murray remained behind at a small out-post, Lapierre House, while her husband went ahead to open Fort Youcon. She gave birth to a daughter during the winter and joined her husband in the spring.[14] Murray's experience, though still untypical, illustrated how much social patterns had changed, at least for those in the upper echelons of the company's service.

The limited social contact with the officer class did not stop all sexual relations with Native women, but the disapproval of formal or lasting ties significantly altered the dynamics of Native-white relationships. Lower ranked company workers were allowed and even encouraged to take Native wives. The American explorer W. Dall, no friend of the Hudson's Bay Company, felt the firm did this deliberately. "Every effort is made" he wrote, "to make these men [company servants] marry Indian wives; thus forcing them to remain in the country by burdening them with females whom they are ashamed to take back to civilization and cannot desert."[15] Had Dall been correct, many of the fur trade employees would have remained in the North and contributed to the development of a mixed blood community. Few actually did so. John Firth, himself a mixed blood, married a woman from Fort McPherson and remained there.[16] Most, however, seem to have either "turned off" their Native wives — that is, passed them to another trader — or abandoned them when they left for the South. There were few such Native-white relationships, especially among the small officer class active in the Yukon. Though evidence is understandably scanty, it does appear that several officers had affairs with Native women. Such liaisons were brief, infrequent, and because the social approbation towards mixed race relationships had been withdrawn, were largely hidden by the professionally mobile men who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company in the Yukon. The children that resulted from these relationships were seldom acknowledged by their fathers. They simply remained with their mothers, raised from birth as Natives.[17]

Under such circumstances, it was difficult for a mixed blood society to take firm root. The isolated posts of the far northwest were too small to support large settlements, though Fort McPherson as a shipping centre for the Yukon trade did attract a sizeable semi-permanent population. The number of "real" Métis, defined according to the standards of the southern Métis culture, was small, isolated and transient. Those Métis wishing to remain in the North typically withdrew to the communities of the southern Mackenzie. There, because of the early establishment of several prominent families, they could live amidst a distinctive Métis community without leaving for the southern plains.

Timing had been crucial. Though the northern Mackenzie and Yukon districts had been opened only a few decades after the southern regions, new attitudes toward inter-racial relationships now dominated. The latter district, opened by Montréal traders, attracted and sustained an identifiable Métis population.[18] To the North, fur trade expansion was led by the Hudson's Bay Company and came at a time of declining sympathy for Native-white marriages.[19]

The fur trade experience does not, however, tell the full story. The differential patterns established before the 1880s were, in some areas, recast by the intervention of the federal government and, in others, entrenched by social and economic forces. As prospectors, developers and government agents came north, the fur trade no longer remained the prime determinant of Native-white relationships. From the 1880s to 1950, southern attitudes towards aboriginal peoples and federal initiatives for Indians and mixed bloods would set new parameters. In the post-fur trade period also, the experience in the Yukon and Mackenzie River valley would break mixed blood societies apart even more into distinct social streams.

In the Mackenzie River valley, the imposition of treaties and the application of government regulations became instrumental in the identification and segregation of mixed blood people and communities. The federal government took little notice of the Mackenzie Métis before the beginning of this century. It was not until the signing of treaties and the attending Métis Scrip Commissions that the government was compelled to deal in any way with the fact that there were mixed blood people in the Territories.[20] A flurry of mineral prospecting in the Mackenzie Valley during the Klondike gold rush convinced the government to provide a treaty in 1899 for the Natives of the southern Mackenzie basin. The discovery of oil at Norman Wells in 1920 convinced Ottawa to extend treaty coverage in 1921 throughout the entire Mackenzie drainage basin. Designed to serve southern business needs, the treaties quickly became a disruptive element in northern society. The Métis of the southern prairies had been offered scrip during the treaty-making process in recognition of their aboriginal rights, thus establishing a formula that was logically extended to the Métis of the Mackenzie.[21] The processes which took place after the signing of Treaty Eight and later, Treaty Eleven of 1921, were much the same.[22]

The treaties, and particularly the provision for scrip, served to create and emphasize divisions in the Mackenzie region between the Indian and the mixed blood population, a division which until then had been blurred.[23] Now Indians became treaty Indians, and the Métis had their rights extinguished in return for a scrip payment of $240 per capita. But who was Indian and who was Métis? It was certainly more than a matter of blood, for some treaty Indians were obviously of mixed racial heritage, in some cases probably genetically and certainly culturally identical to many Métis. Often the division was a matter of choice, and sometimes it was a matter of chance. Scrip was given out only once to a family. This meant that if a man had received scrip in Manitoba in the 1870s and then moved to Fort Resolution, his descendants were ineligible for scrip. Conversely, if he had "joined a band of Indians under Treaty" he and his descendants were ineligible for scrip, even if he or they had subsequently become enfranchised.[24] If a person was judged to be "pursuing the Indian mode of life" then he was not a Métis. The government took great pains to avoid paying anyone twice.[25]

Some actual cases from Treaty Eleven will show how these criteria were applied. In June 1925 application for scrip was made on behalf of D'Arcy Phillip Arden, aged six, and his sister Catherine, aged ten. They were the children of D'Arcy Arden, a white trader who had lived in the north for many years, and his wife Adelice, a full-blooded Indian. In their application they stated that "[w]hen Mr. Conroy [H.A. Conroy, the Treaty Commissioner] made the Treaty at Fort Norman he strongly advised us to take treaty which we did.[26] Two years later Mr. Harris [T.W. Harris, Indian Agent at Fort Simpson] said Mr. Conroy made a mistake and told us that they would not pay any more treaty, but we would receive scrip." Although these children were obviously of mixed blood, residents of the Territory and not living the "Indian mode of life" their application was denied. Once having taken treaty they were formally Indians and could not receive scrip.[27] In the case of James Balsillie, whose father was white and mother a Red River Métis, the claim was disallowed because his mother had taken scrip in Manitoba.[28] Before any scrip was given out, all the old scrip lists, seventeen of them, were checked to see that no antecendent had received scrip, a procedure which prolonged the process considerably. The claim of Mary Rose Furlong, *née* Nadydza, was disallowed because she stated that both her parents were Indians.[29] That of Henry Lafferty, both of whose parents were stated to be Métis, was disallowed because both had taken treaty, which made him an Indian.[30] That the matter had nothing to do with blood is perhaps best shown by a case such as the family of Marguerite Bouvier. Born in Winnipeg in 1854, both she and her son Michel received scrip, but her three daughters had taken treaty, so the daughters' claims for scrip were rejected.[31]

The status of Indian or Métis, once chosen, could not, as a rule, be interchanged. Once having taken treaty, one could not, by taking scrip, become Métis; once having received scrip, one could not, by taking treaty, become an Indian.[32] When Treaty Eight was signed at Fort Resolution in 1900 the Chipewyan Indians of the region put forward Pierre Beaulieu (1833–1910), a member of a well-known Métis family, as their chief, because, like many Métis, he had a better knowledge of the language and the customs of whites than the Indians did. This choice was rejected by the treaty commissioner, since anyone generally recognized as Métis was not permitted to take treaty.[33] Neither culture, blood, nor the wishes of the people themselves counted against this policy of the government to assign each person to his "proper" category.

Despite the apparent inflexibility, some federal officers recognized the inappropriateness of the ethnic classifications, as applied in the Mackenzie Valley. During the 1930s, the impoverished circumstances of the region's mixed blood population caused several officials in the area to recommend changes in the government's treaty policy. M. Christianson, Alberta Inspector of Indian Agencies, visited the Mackenzie District in 1936. In his report, Christianson argued for a more flexible approach to the treaty and mixed blood question:

> Wherever I went I found that most of the Halfbreeds live the life of an Indian, and are of course intermarried with Indians, and a great many of them are no different in appearance from the Indians, the white blood being practically obscured.... I believe our Department should take into Treaty all Halfbreeds or three-quarter breeds who are living with Indians, and following their mode of life.[34]

Encouraged by Treaty Eight and Treaty Eleven Indian Agents, and by local missionaries, a number of mixed bloods took advantage of the opportunity to become treaty Indians. Most, however, declined, fearing that by accepting treaty they might someday be forced to live on a reserve.[35] By the 1940s, over 160 people had availed themselves of this change in policy, though the government was careful to ensure that only mixed bloods living as Indians were given the right to alter their legally defined ethnicity. Federal officials soon came to doubt the wisdom of the policy. One government agent noted in 1943,

> The Deputy Minister expressed the view that the admission of this class (half-breeds) of persons to band membership was a backward step and should be avoided except where special circumstances existed. However, now that formal action was taken [*sic*] to admit them it is doubtful whether we could be justified in striking them off from the evidence on your files. About all that can be done now is to question their eligibility and as time permits examine each individual case. It will probably be found that a good many of them will have to be allowed to remain in membership.[36]

Though there had been a brief weakening of the rigid demarcation between Indians and mixed bloods — a concession of limited economic, social and cultural utility in much of the Mackenzie Valley — the government soon rectified the situation. The more formal, legalistic definition embodied in the Indian Act would hereafter hold sway.

Another example of the inflexibility of the government in this respect was the question of permitting the Métis to hunt and trap in Wood Buffalo Park after its creation in 1922. Bishop Breynat urged the government to give them this right:

> [Some] half breeds [*sic*] natives ... have to live an Indian life, although they may have houses at the fort [Fort Smith]. Most of them should have been accepted in the Treaty instead of being refused the privilege ... they have to meet so many difficulties to secure their living that to forbid them access to [Wood Buffalo Park] ... would seem to be imposing upon them too much hardship.[37]

Local officials supported this request, recommending that "all the aborigines of that district [be put] on the same basis." But the Department of Indian Affairs ruled that "it is not desirable to re-open the half-breed question in the Northwest Territories."[38]

This division of races, once emphasized by the treaties of 1899 and 1921, was reinforced by further government policies, a good example of which is the way the government paid for the schooling of Native children in the Mackenzie district. In the 1920s there were eight schools in the Mackenzie Valley, four run by the Anglicans and four by the Roman Catholics.[39] The churches received a grant from the government for each student attending the schools, but these grants came from two different sources. The schools had to submit a list of Indian students and those "half-breeds who [followed] ... the Indian mode of life with Indian communities"[40] to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and a separate list of Métis who did not follow the Indian way of life, and white students to the Northern Administration Branch of the Department of the Interior. The purpose of this distinction was to see that the grant came from the proper department, but a side-effect was to emphasize the distinction in the schools between the different groups, a distinction which reflected bureaucratic conventions rather than the realities of Native society. When in 1916 the Reverend A.J. Vale, a missionary-teacher at St. Peter's school at Hay River, was asked to report to the government on the careers of his graduates, he was careful to indicate whether each student was an Indian, half-breed, or "quarter-breed."[41] In this way the government was provided with a running account of the ethnicity of the school population of the Territories according to its own categories.

The non-Indian non-white status of northerners of mixed blood was also emphasized by the Northwest Territories game regulations. At one time all Indians, Inuit, and people of mixed blood who were *bona fide* residents of the Northwest Territories were permitted to hunt and trap without a license.[42] This right, considered a birthright by many, was altered in 1929 to compel those who did not lead the life of an Indian or an Inuk to buy a license. The cost, $100 each per year, amounted to a preventative tax. Again, this was a distinction based not on race or blood but on a cultural factor — in this case a person's way of life as perceived by the local government agent.[43]

If the Métis happened to live in the Mackenzie watershed, but a few miles south of the 60th parallel, another complication was thrust into their lives. Because the creation of the province of Alberta in 1905 put the Indians of the northern part of the province into a jurisdiction different from that of the Indians a few miles to the north in the Territories, it was decided in 1927 to give them the same privileges of hunting and trapping in the Territories as the Indians resident there possessed. But this accommodation to common sense was not extended to the Métis of northern Alberta, who had similar hunting and trapping patterns. Twenty-four Métis of the Fort Fitzgerald area who continued to hunt across the border were presented in 1928 with a bill for non-resident game licenses totalling $2,400. The fees were waived for that year, but the Métis were informed that they would have to buy licenses in the future. Their Indian neighbours were spared this expense.[44] In 1934 the secretary-treasurer of L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest forwarded a petition to Ottawa asking that the Métis of northern Alberta be permitted to hunt and trap in the Territories.[45] When this request was refused he repeated it in a letter whose tone reflects the desperation that the Métis felt:

> Unfortunately, the Metis with the want of foresight characteristic of native races, and too often at the insistence of interested speculators ... withdrew from Treaty to accept Scrip in the satisfaction of their aboriginal claims ... Experience has shown that ... they would have been better had they retained their aboriginal rights. Unfitted as they are by natural instinct to settle down to the pursuits and avocations of the white man, they are precluded on the other hand by official discrimination from enjoying the natural rights that belong to the native population ... With all due respect, we feel that the Metis people of Alberta are the native population and cannot be placed in any other category.... Their condition is far worse in every respect than that of the Indians and are [*sic*] such as to inspire grave apprehensions for the future ...[46]

This request was also refused, mainly because it was felt that the game of the Northwest Territories was under sufficient pressure from resident Métis. In this case the Métis were affected not only by the artificial divisions imposed on them (or at one time offered to them) by the central government, but also by a political boundary drawn through the midst of their traditional hunting grounds.

When in 1923 the Territorial Administration set up three game preserves in the Territories totalling 75,000 square miles in area — Yellowknife, Slave River and Peel River — the Métis of the region found themselves under a new bureaucratic disability. This was particularly true of those at Fort Rae and Fort Resolution, who, because their communities were within the boundaries of preserves, were prevented from hunting any kind of game near their homes. The Métis found themselves in the same situation as the whites; both groups could not hunt even rabbits or game birds, and this was the subject of much complaint to the government, but to no avail. The preserves were for treaty Indians only.[47]

It is difficult to gauge precisely the social and cultural impact of the various government policies, particularly as it is not yet clear how vigorously the game laws, school regulations, and treaty "privileges" were enforced. Restrictions on hunting, however, clearly re-enforced or even created distinctions in an otherwise homogeneous community. Similarly the yearly annuity payment rituals separated treaty and non-status peoples. In 1936, P.W. Headingly, a medical superintendent with the Department of Indian Affairs, noted that treaty payments frequently caused dissension in the northern communities of Treaty Eleven, towns where the legal distinctions provided the single main distinction between social groups. Headingly noted that many northern mixed bloods wanted to be taken into treaty:

> At the present time there is a situation in several families where one member is a treaty Half Breed and the others non treaty. This not only works at a disadvantage to these people regarding hunting and trapping rights but is always a source of contention every time treaty is paid.[48]

The treaty process had evidently created barriers that would subsequently prove very difficult to breach.

It can be seen therefore that the mixed blood people of the Mackenzie watershed were suddenly faced, during the treaty-making process, with choices which were not only difficult but irrevocable for them and for their descendants. These decisions, strongly influenced by a distant government's categorization of Native groups, intensified legal differences and disabilities which grew sharper over the years. Where Métis communities already existed, the imposition of external regulations only sharpened cultural distinctions between Indians (including many of mixed blood) and Métis. Where cultural and economic forces favoured a merging of Indian and mixed blood peoples, the government's initiative served to create differences between very similar social groups. As Richard Slobodin has pointed out, the legal and administrative organization imposed in the Northwest Territories by the federal government and its agencies has tended to emphasize the distinctions between Métis and Indian — the "legal-administrative classification of most Métis expresses a difference between the status, *vis-à-vis* other ethnic groups, of Métis and that of Indians and Europeans."[49] This distinction became particularly sharp when in the 1960s the federal government began to build housing at places like Fort Resolution for Indians — but not for Métis. This exclusionary policy "exacerbated bitter feelings on the part of some members of both groups . . . ."[50]

Thus in the southern Mackenzie region ethnic differentiation was not a matter of blood but a social process reinforced by government policy. In the North, where ethnic lines would have blurred, they were kept sharp by government policy. The same would have been true in the Yukon, except there government policy was very different. In the Yukon there would be no treaty and therefore no systematic attempt by the government to identify and separate mixed blood and Indian populations. The development of the mixed blood people, therefore, would rest on the social and economic patterns extant in the post-fur trade period. Just as the fur trade conditions had worked against distinct mixed blood communities, so did inter-racial relations in the period after the 1870s, when American traders and prospectors moved into the upper Yukon River basin.

The arrival of the "Yankees" through the 1870s and 1880s exacerbated past patterns. The prospectors came, like the fur traders, largely without mates, and many formed alliances with the Native women. R.J. Bowen, an Anglican missionary, complained that the miners had been "thoughtless enough to lure the Indian squaws into their home[s] and into the dance hall. The results of such action was [*sic*] seen in the number of half-breed children."[51] The white fathers, most of them transient, seldom assumed responsibility for these children.

By the late nineteenth century, attitudes toward Natives had shifted considerably from the more favourable comments characteristic of the earlier fur trading years. Rampant social Darwinism coloured white opinions of the allegedly dying red race of North America. Armed with philosophical justification for their racism, whites readily disparaged any who lived with, or like, the Natives.[52] Short-term sexual affairs were defensible, if not entirely laudable, but those few white men, like George Carmack, the co-discoverer of the Klondike gold fields, who lived with the Indians, had moved beyond the pale. They were "squaw men," an epithet of particular virulence which signalled the intense distaste in the white community for their social preferences.

The pattern of paternal neglect of mixed blood offspring and general disapproval of Native-white relationships continued through the gold rush. The influx of tens of thousands of would-be miners into the Yukon between 1896 and 1899 threatened the tenuous balance between Native and white. Believing that the prospectors' invasion would destroy the Indian population, Anglican missionaries and the federal government worked together to keep the Natives apart from white society. Sexual relations continued in a manner characteristic of new world contact situations, but the resulting population lacked the social and economic context necessary to form a distinct mixed blood society.

The nineteenth century experience proved crucial, for attitudes toward mixed blood people and mixed race relationships only hardened after 1900. Because the fur trade continued through to mid-century, the back-country experience remained largely unchanged. Men like Dan Cadzow at Rampart House, Del Vangorder and Poole Field at Ross River, and Eugène Jacquot at Burwash were typical of the small number of white traders who had Native wives and remained in the territory with their families.[53] In 1912, for example, Bishop Stringer reported that "I know of about half a dozen white men who are married in a regular fashion to Indian women, and who apparently intend to spend all their lives in this country."[54] Such families, extended over time into large clans, retained their prominence in their particular areas. Yet these patrifocal families had little contact with each other and did not constitute a distinct mixed blood community.

The life experience of Joe Jacquot, son of Eugène, suggests the unique pattern of the prominent fur trade families. Eugène, of French descent, married a mixed blood (Tlingit) Indian woman and moved in 1904 to the Kluane Lake area. Joe was born at Burwash in 1928, but was sent to Whitehorse, Dawson City and eventually to Richmond, British Columbia, for schooling. He left school in 1943 and returned to Burwash to work with his father there. The pattern, though unique, suggests that the life of the prominent mixed blood fur trade families differed greatly from that of most mixed blood children.[55] They were often educated away from their homes, raised in more prosperous conditions than others in their communities, and were clearly separated, socially and culturally, from the Indian population. This distinction, however, was on a family by family basis, and there was little to bind these widely dispersed and culturally unique individuals together as a distinct social group. Such families were, however, exceptions. Most of the traders and white "bushmen" (independent trappers) stayed for only a short time and if they established a relationship with a Native woman it was usually temporary.

The dominant white society looked with intense disapproval on the "squaw men" and their mixed blood children. The contention of Grafton Burke, a physician at Fort Yukon, that "traders in these isolated places vie with each other as to who can swell the population," illustrated the generally disparaging attitude to such men.[56] Similarly, the allegation of Z.T. Wood of the Mounted Police, that "these [squaw] men purchase liquor and retail it to the Indians, and we have reason to believe they allow their squaws to co-habit with other white men and Indians," suggested that no "respectable" man would follow such a lifestyle.[57] N.A.D. Armstrong, a hunter-prospector, typified white reaction in his response to the marriage of his friend Coward to a "dusky bride." "What a pity" he wrote in his diary, "that a fine specimen of a man should have fallen so low as to marry a full-blooded squaw."[58] Such a marriage carried significant social penalties. Laura Berton told of a young man, the son of a Dawson civil servant, who married a mixed blood woman:

> She was a pretty little thing, bright and neat, and I think she could have made him a good wife, but the parents were so shocked they would neither see nor speak with him. This attitude drove him from the town and back into the bush, where his life was spent among the Indians, hunting and cutting wood for a living. Now here he was, standing by the river with his dark, wiry children clustered around him, the fish wheels in the background turning slowly with the current, the salmon smoking under the trees. In all intents and purposes he was a native.[59]

Selecting a Native wife forced difficult choices, for in so doing, a man cut many bonds with white society. His children could expect little better.[60]

Missionaries and government officials did not so much create this social environment as inherit it, though their encouragement of Native-white segregation left little room for a mixed blood community. Indeed, their activities in regard to the mixed bloods served primarily to re-enforce, through official recognition, patterns already extant in the Yukon Territory. Whereas in the Mackenzie Valley federal edicts forced Indians and mixed bloods into irrevocable definitions of "self," in the Yukon the government supported, for self-interested reasons, existing conditions.[61]

That the Anglican church won the "rush for souls" into the Yukon River valley was of key importance. When they first arrived in the Yukon in the 1860s and established an ecclesiastical domination over the Natives that would survive into the 1940s, Anglican missionaries demonstrated an attitude of indifference towards mixed blood aspirations. Though Bishop Bompas tried to break out of the Church Missionary Society's pattern of neglecting mixed bloods, later bishops and missionaries adhered to the institutional policy. If possible, mixed bloods were to be patterned after their white fathers, and integrated into white society. Otherwise, mixed bloods were to be treated as Indians and ministered to as such.[62]

The church's educational policies illustrate this approach quite clearly. In contrast to the situation in the Northwest Territories, where children of all races attended the same schools, the schools of the Yukon were generally segregated by race. The Department of Indian Affairs funded a limited network of day schools for Indians, and, after 1911, supported an Anglican residential school at Carcross for them. This modest programme, designed primarily to silence Anglican criticism that the government was ignoring the northern Indians, had very limited goals. Federal authorities foresaw little possible economic growth and sought only to impart the rudimentary elements of education to a people destined for life as nomadic harvesters. The church concurred and modified its curriculum to reflect regional realities.[63]

But what of the mixed bloods, particularly those whose fathers remained with their families? Regulations prohibited mixed bloods from attending Indian residential schools. On occasion, these rules were bent slightly. The daughter of Poole Field, a fur trader, was allowed into the Carcross school because, Bishop Stringer argued, her father had "an immense influence over the Liard and Pelly Indians, and can do a great deal in getting children for our schools."[64] Her father obviously wanted her to have a formal, Christian education, an avenue which was, however, open to only a select few. When the government discovered mixed bloods in residence at a school, it often withdrew the grant for those students. Where possible, the missionaries kept the children in school, especially in the early years, when many were orphans, but they did so at the church's expense.[65]

Another alternative was to allow mixed blood children into the territorial public schools, which operated at Whitehorse, Dawson, and most mining camps. The non-Native majority, however, made entry difficult for Indians or mixed bloods. As late as 1947, the Yukon Indian Agent wrote concerning the Whitehorse school that "it is not denied that these children [Indian and mixed blood] are not welcome there."[66] Mixed blood children were therefore denied regular access to Indian day schools (though regulations were often ignored)[67] and residential schools, and in most instances the public school system as well. Their problems were compounded by the fact that most of their families lived in the fur trading districts, far removed from available schools.[68]

Paternal demands that a reasonable educational opportunity be provided were not totally ignored, largely because the Anglican church and the federal government felt that these identifiable mixed bloods needed special attention. Deputy Superintendent General Duncan Campbell Scott acknowledged the uniqueness of the Yukon situation:

> The Department only considers itself responsible for the education of half-breeds who are now in treaty, who live the Indian mode of life on reserves. Other half-breeds, non-residents on reserves, are considered ordinary citizens of the province in which they reside, and the obligation for their education rests upon the province. In the Yukon Territory, if we were to follow that policy, the class of half-breeds which Bishop Stringer wishes to indicate would not come within the jurisdiction of this Department, but I recognize that the conditions there are peculiar, and I am, therefore, willing to undertake the responsibility that may attend the scheme if adopted.[69]

In 1920, the church and government opened St. Paul's Hostel in Dawson City. Mixed blood children, often orphans or members of destitute families, lived in the missionary-supervised dormitory and attended the Dawson public school.[70] Public opposition arose in response to the arrangement. Many parents did not want mixed blood children in the school; many others opposed the granting of federal assistance to the venture. The *Mayo-Keno Bulletin* caught the public temper when in September 1925 it editorialized,

> Why should the people's money be used to house, feed and clothe the somewhat prolific progeny of able bodied men who have mated with native women... Does the Federal Government realize that the result of its misplaced generosity is to encourage a certain class known as "squawmen" to shift their parental responsibilities on the shoulders of an unwilling public?[71]

Such opposition could be, and was, ignored. St. Paul's enjoyed a lengthy and, according to Anglican church accounts, successful life.[72] The hostel held special significance in that it told a great deal about church and government ambitions for the mixed blood children. It did more than segregate mixed blood from Indian students, for St. Paul's had a radically different purpose than did the Carcross residential school. Because many of these children remained under paternal control and therefore had a strong non-Native influence in their lives, school administrators believed they could extract and embellish their students' "whiteness." In a telling phrase, Anglican Bishop Geddes wrote that the hostel's intention was to allow the student "to fit himself to take his place in the community as a whiteman."[73]

The educational situation began to change slightly in the 1940s. A noticeable increase in the number of Indians and mixed bloods living in the towns forced the missionaries and government agents to deal again with the schooling of mixed bloods. In Whitehorse, for instance, mixed bloods were denied access to the white schools and had to attend the Whitehorse Indian school. In 1946 the Rev. H.J. Lee started a new school for Indians, "half-breeds," "borderline Indians," and "other children of similar economic status."[74] As had happened in the Mackenzie River district, the process raised questions of departmental responsibility; on this occasion, the mixed bloods' education was deemed a territorial duty. Almost a decade would pass, however, before Indians and mixed bloods would be systematically integrated into the territorial public school system.

The pattern remained very clear. If the father remained with his family, children were treated as, and expected to be, "white" citizens. They had no legal rights as Indians, and through the hostel some were educated as non-Natives. If, as was more common, the father left the region, his children were raised as Indians and treated as such. There was no in-between, no mixed blood community identification.

This process was re-enforced by official federal policy set down in legal statutes. The implementation of treaties elsewhere forced Indians and mixed bloods to indicate their ethnicity, declaring Indian status by taking treaty or surrendering rights by accepting half-breed scrip. There was no Yukon treaty. The federal government had in 1894 told its first representative in the area, Superintendent Charles Constantine of the North West Mounted Police, "not to give encouragement to the idea that they [the Yukon Indians] will be received into treaty, and taken under the care of the government."[75] That position scarcely wavered, largely because the government feared alienating valuable mineral-bearing land, and, conversely, because federal officials were convinced that the harvesting lifestyle of the northern Natives faced little threat. With no formal treaty, there was no need for a formal declaration of Indian or mixed blood status. The federal government preferred a *laissez-faire* approach to Native rights in the Yukon. Avoiding the issue of ethnicity, and the questions of status versus non-status Indian seemed to be in the government's best interests. Because few benefits were extended specifically to the Indians before 1950, there was little advantage in a widespread and costly enumeration of the Indian and mixed blood population. It seemed best, in the short term, to do as the non-Native population of the Yukon did and treat them all as Indians.

The government's hand was forced in the area of game regulations. Though access to game remained more open than in the Northwest Territories, several territorial initiatives placed modest limits on Native hunting privileges. Here, however, the government accepted social conditions, and treated mixed bloods and Indian people equally, provided of course the mixed bloods followed the "Indian way." When the Yukon decided to implement trapline registration, this pattern remained intact. As Indian Agent R.J. Meek reported in 1947, "it was suggested to the Yukon Council, when trap lines are eventually registered, the order of precedence be (a) Indians, (b) half-breeds and old-timers [and] (c) others."[76] Given that there was little formal differentiation between mixed bloods and Indians, most mixed bloods saw their rights respected during the registration process, which began in 1950.

Not infrequently, however, government officials were forced to make a formal, individual determination of ethnicity. The case of Arthur, charged in 1933 with violating the Yukon Game Ordinance, provides a classic illustration of the process. Arthur's father, his name unknown, had lived with Arthur's mother until shortly after the child's birth. Arthur's mother died and he was raised as an Indian by his grandmother. Because he was of mixed blood, Arthur was technically guilty of hunting out of season. The attending police officer, however, believed that Arthur should be treated as an Indian. His superior officers concurred. Superintendent T.B. Caulkin noted, "in view of the fact that he is at present following the Indian mode of life, he might well be classed as an Indian for the purposes of the Game Ordinance." Arthur, born a mixed blood but raised an Indian, was now legally an Indian.[77]

The matter assumed new urgency during World War II. The construction of the Alaska Highway and Canol Pipeline brought thousands of men, mostly American, to the Yukon.[78] Inevitably, these transient men met Indian women. Just as inevitably, numerous children resulted from what were for the most part short-term liaisons. Some of the men promised more than they were prepared to deliver. When the work was completed and most of the men headed south, several of the jilted women asked the federal government for assistance in tracking them. Such appeals typically brought little response. Yet the large number of mixed blood children created new difficulties for the government. Were the mixed blood progeny to be treated as Indians or as non-Natives? Under the Indian Act, any Native woman marrying a white man lost her Indian status, as did her children. Few of the Indian women involved with construction workers in the 1940s had been formally married, and therefore their status was not in doubt. Some questions remained, however, as to whether the mixed blood children continued to qualify as Indians.

The federal government stuck by its established tradition. The Yukon Controller, J.E. Gibben, asked in 1947 for clarification of the national policy. A federal declaration that "where the father is known to be of non-Indian status the child is regarded as non-Indian until careful investigation by this [Indian Affairs] Branch enables an official ruling to be made"[79] seemed, to Gibben, to be "at variance with rulings given by legal officers of the Indian Affairs Branch during the period when [I] acted as [Indian] Agent in this Territory."[80] At that time, Gibben had been reassured by federal officials that "the illegitimate children of Indian mothers and white fathers were to be regarded as Indians."[81] The Superintendent, Reserves and Trusts, resolved the matter by declaring,

> Where the father of an illegitimate child is known to be of non-Indian status the child is regarded as non-Indian until investigation shows that it is impossible to obtain a formal acknowledgement of paternity from the putative father. When such acknowledgement is impossible to obtain then the illegitimate children of Indian mothers and white fathers are to be regarded as Indians.[82]

The established tradition of allowing the behaviour of the father *vis-à-vis* his children to decide official determination of ethnicity remained intact into the late 1940s.

The issue was not a minor one, for the gradual introduction of the welfare state during and after World War II forced the government into a more regular determination of ethnicity. When Family Allowances were introduced in 1944, the federal government decided that the Eskimos and "nomads" of the Yukon and Northwest Territories would be treated differently than other Canadians. Believing that monthly cash allotments would "not go to the benefit of the children," authorities decided that allowances would be paid in kind to all living the "native way." "Whites and people of mixed blood (not nomads)" were treated in the standard fashion, the only exception being "where a person of mixed blood had become a nomad after official registration."[83] For other programmes, the government proved less flexible. Rowena Lord, an Old Crow Indian woman married to a mixed blood, was refused support from the Indian Health Service in 1950, even though she was separated from her husband.[84] The rapid diversification of government services after 1945, each carrying its own set of regulations, forced federal agents to address more specificially the question of mixed blood status. Though the pattern, for a time, was to respect cultural and economic realities, over time bureaucratic strictures increasingly required territorial administrators to separate mixed blood and Indian peoples. Only after 1950, therefore, did the Yukon situation begin to compare to that of the Mackenzie, where the government had already forced a definition of ethnicity. In the Yukon, the differentiation would, for the most part, separate status from non-status Indians, rather than the more culturally expressive distinction between Métis and Indians.

Unlike the situation in the Mackenzie River valley, there would be no federally-sponsored initiative to create a separate mixed blood, or Métis, status or to deny mixed bloods any of the few rights and privileges accorded to Indians. With no treaty to impose, no annuities to disperse and few Native-only game regulations to enforce, the federal government saw no justification for tampering with social realities.

Blood lines were never enough to create a viable mixed blood community. The condition of the mixed bloods in the Yukon documents the opposite end of the spectrum from the experience of the "New Nation" of the Canadian plains, and is much closer to the North American norm. Influenced by the Anglican church, which had traditionally opposed mixed blood societies in the West, segregated from the white community by discriminatory attitudes and policies, and, for the most part, lacking the continued presence of a white father, most mixed bloods adopted the lifestyle, values and attitudes of their Indian relatives. Because the Yukon played little role in federal plans, even the government left matters to evolve independently. The Yukon developed as a bicultural society — Indian and white — and mixed bloods, with the exception of a few prominent fur trade families, were forced to choose between them.

This preliminary attempt to explain the differential evolution of mixed blood populations in the Canadian North has stressed the importance of external factors, principally non-Native attitudes, church programmes and government policies. As Slobodin has already done for the post-war period, future historical studies should examine more closely the personal, family and community forces which have sustained the patterns identified here.

Though the specific developments are unique to the Yukon and Northwest Territories, the general trend is likely closer to the Canadian norm than the situation on the southern prairies. Across the country, particularly outside the agricultural belt, the meeting of single males and Native inhabitants on the development frontier led to extensive racial mixture. In most areas not tied directly to the Red River Métis society, however, this did not inevitably lead to a distinctive mixed blood culture. In some areas, like the northern Mackenzie River valley, government initiatives, particularly treaties, later required an official racially-based differentiation that often hardened over time into social distance between status Indians and those deemed Métis or non-status. Sometimes, as in the case of Treaty Nine in northern Ontario, the legal distinctions imposed under the treaty fit, rather than altered, existing social patterns.[85] In other regions, as happened in the Yukon, the absence of external intervention allowed regional social forces to determine patterns of association and identification. It is too early to describe with authority the broader national patterns of mixed blood development. Hopefully though, the study of conditions in the Yukon and Northwest Territories will encourage others to examine the extent to which the formation of Indian and Métis societies was more than a matter of blood.

NOTES

1 The process began when formal negotiations started in 1973 and culminated in the merger of the Yukon Native Brotherhood and the Yukon Association of Non-Status Indians in 1980.

2 On the contemporary Métis communities (c. 1960) see Richard Slobodin, *Metis of the Mackenzie District* (Ottawa: Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology, 1966), and David M. Smith, "Fort Resolution, Northwest Territories," in J. Hellm, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians, vol. 6: Subarctic* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1981).

3 John R. Foster, "The Country-born in the Red River Settlement, 1820-1850" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1972); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980); Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Frits Pannekoek, "The Churches and the Social Structure in the Red River Area, 1818-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1973); Frits Pannekoek, "The Anglican Church and the Disintegration of Red River Society, 1818-1870," in Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook, *The West and the Nation: essays in honour of W.L. Morton* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); Frits Pannekoek, "The Rev. Griffiths Owen Corbet and the Red River Civil War of 1869-1870," *Canadian Historical Review* 57, no. 2, (June 1976): 133-49; D.N. Sprague, "The Manitoba Land Question, 1870-1892," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15, no. 3, (Fall 1980): 74-84.

4 John Foster, "The Metis: The People and the Term,"' *Prairie Forum* 3, no. 1 (1978): 79-90; John Foster, "The Origins of the Mixed Bloods in the Canadian West," in L.H. Thomas, ed., *Essays on*

Western History (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976). On the broader historical and anthropological questions raised by the study of mixed blood societies, see Foster, "Some Questions and Perspectives on the Problem of Metis Roots," in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985). Our thanks to Jennifer Brown for permitting us to examine a pre-publication copy of this manuscript.

5 Jacqueline Peterson, "The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of a Metis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1830" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1981). Also see Peterson, "Many Roads to Red River: Metis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1915," in Peterson and Brown, *New Peoples*.

6 J. Pollard, "Growing up Metis: Fur Traders' Children in the Pacific Northwest," in J.D. Wilson, ed., *An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History* (Vancouver: CSCI Publications, 1984). J. Pollard, "Fur Trade Children: The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1984).

7 Olive Dickason has explained the lack of a distinctive mixed blood population in the Northeast (Acadia and Québec) as due to the French officials' plan to create "one nation" in the region through assimilation. O. Dickason, "From 'One Nation' in the Northeast to 'New Nation' in the Northwest: A look at the emergence of the Metis," in Peterson and Brown, *New Peoples*. Our thanks to Jennifer Brown for permitting us to examine a pre-publication copy of this manuscript.

8 Foster, "The Origins of the Mixed Bloods," 71.

9 Several scholars, mostly anthropologists — R. Slobodin, David M. Smith, and a few others have studied questions of this type, though their work has a heavily contemporary focus.

10 Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties* provides the best summary of the role of women in the fur trade. See also, Sylvia Van Kirk, "The Custom of the Country: An Examination of Fur Trade Marriage Practices," in L.H. Thomas, ed., *Essays on Western History* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976).

11 Obviously the buffalo hunt, so much a part of southern Métis society, had no similar counterpart in the Mackenzie Valley.

12 Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 31.

13 K.S. Coates, "Furs Along the Yukon: Hudson's Bay Company-Native Trade in the Yukon River Valley, 1840-1893," *B.C. Studies* 55 (Autumn 1982). The broader pattern of Native-white relations in the Yukon is described in K.S. Coates, "Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1950" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1984).

14 T.J. Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), 244-52.

15 W. Dall, *Alaska and Its Pleasures* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1970), 104.

16 Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B200/b/43, fol. 209, Camsell to Grahame, 24 March 1884. See also Robert Kennicott, "The Journal of Robert Kennicott, 19 May 1859-11 February 1862," in J.A. James, *The First Scientific Explorations of Russian America and the Purchase of Alaska* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1947) on northern fur traders, including James Flett, and their Native wives.

17 Catherine McClelland, "Indian Stories About the First Whites in Northwestern America," in M. Lantis, ed., *Ethnohistory in Southwestern Alaska and the Southern Yukon* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970).

18 The 1901 Census lists 2,788 half-breeds or Métis in the Unorganized Territories. Of these, 2,395 were in Athabaska, 147 in Franklin-Keewatin, 176 in Mackenzie, 50 in Ungava and 20 in the Yukon.

19 As John Foster has shown, the Hudson's Bay mixed blood tradition varied significantly from that originating in the Montréal trade. In the far North, even that differential development would not occur within the fur trade context. Though the communities of the south would survive, the mixed bloods of the northern Mackenzie and the Yukon River valleys would bear little resemblance to their southern "country-born" counterparts. R. Slobodin emphasizes the Hudson's Bay tradition of northern Métis society. The argument, however, is based more on family names than the socio-cultural environment Foster describes as crucial to the establishment of the "country-born"society.

20 By Territories we mean the area included in the modern Northwest Territories, not the old North-West Territories of the pre-1905 era.

21 The scrip offered to the mixed bloods of the Mackenzie was of two kinds: cash or land scrip. Cash scrip could be used only to pay dues to the government; land scrip gave the recipient the right to 240 acres of land. Those mixed bloods in Treaty Eight who chose land scrip soon lost it, according to to Bishop Breynat, to "white sharpers." Quoted in René Fumoleau, *As Long as This Land Shall Last: A History of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, 1870-1939* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 385.

22 A total of 1,195 money scrips at $240 each and 48 land scrips for 240 acres of land each were issued to Métis under Treaty Eight, which covered the upper Mackenzie basin south of the 60th parallel (with a minor extension north to Great Slave Lake). Under Treaty Eleven only money scrip was paid (since it was felt that most land scrip fell into the hands of traders). In 1924, 138 claims were paid under this treaty. See Fumoleau, *This Land*, 209.

23 The legal definition of the term "Indian" appears in The Indian Act, 1876, S.C. 1876, c. 18 (39 Vict.). On this subject see *The Historical Development of the Indian Act* (Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978), chapter four, "Canadian Indian Policy Initiatives: 1867–1876." Under the Act, the "Superintendent-General or his agent" had the power to determine who was a half-breed and who could be admitted into treaty.

24 See R. Fumoleau, *This Land*, 207–8.

25 Privy Council Order 1172 of 12 April 1921 declared that "[t]he right of a Half-breed to share in the grant ... shall be considered to have been extinguished if such Half-breed has at any time joined a Band of Indians under treaty, although subsequently discharged therefrom, or if scrip has been issued to him or to his parents or guardians ... but if the right of one parent has not been extinguished the fact that the right of the other has been, shall not affect the right of compensation of the child of such parents."

26 Apparently Bishop Breynat also encouraged many Métis to take treaty. Adele Lafferty of Fort Rae recalled that the bishop had said to one family "[t]ake treaty money. It will be better for you and you will benefit from it. If you do not take treaty money, you will be like the whiteman, you will not get anything out of it. You will live like the wind. But if you take treaty money like the Indians the government will help you." Quoted in Fumoleau, *This Land*, 209–10. He also urged the government to take into treaty all mixed bloods who were living in the Indian fashion. Late in his life, in an article entitled "Canada's Blackest Blot," he castigated the government for its neglect of the half-breeds, and urged that they be protected under treaty. The article is printed in Fumoleau, *This Land*, appendix XV.

27 Public Archives of Canada (hereafter PAC), RG 15, v. 1372, no. 79.

28 Ibid., no. 71.

29 Ibid., no. 51.

30 Ibid., no. 64.

31 Ibid., no. 54.

32 As noted above, the government did permit some Métis to take treaty during the 1930s.

33 PAC, RG 15, v. 1372, no. 54. It was not stated what the grounds were for such "general recognition."

34 PAC, RG 10, v. 4092, f. 567,205. Christianson to McGill, 18 August 1936.

35 Ibid. Memorandum, 17 April 1937.

36 Ibid. C.W. Jackson to R.A. Hoey, 12 August 1943.

37 Quoted in Fumoleau, *This Land*, 256.

38 Ibid. The role of the Roman Catholic church in helping to reinforce the ethnic identity of the Native people of the southern Mackenzie Valley was a somewhat ambivalent one. Traditionally the church had encouraged a separate identity among the Métis of the southern plains. But by the twentieth century church leaders (particularly Bishop Breynat) were urging the Mackenzie Métis to seek status as Treaty Indians, in the belief that this course would be to their economic advantage. Speaking on behalf of some Métis at Fort Resolution who wanted to be taken into Treaty Eleven, Breynat stated, "They are identified with the country as well as the Indians, they intermarry with the latter, live their kind of life and should get the same protection. I would consider it a good policy on the part of the Department to offer treaty to those halfbreeds. Those who would accept it would enjoy the privileges of the Indians." (Quoted in Fumoleau, *This Land*, 256.) It was the opinion of Breynat that whatever cultural distinctions still existed between Métis and Indians were not sufficient to justify the economic disabilities which the distinct status of the latter group imposed upon them. But by this time government policy was set on a different course, and Breynat's pleas were ignored.

39 The Anglican schools were at Hay River, Fort Simpson, Fort McPherson and Herschel Island; the Roman Catholic schools were at Fort Smith, Fort Resolution, Fort Providence and Fort Simpson. All were residential schools except the one at Fort Smith and the Catholic school at Fort Simpson, which were day schools.

40 PAC, RG 10, v. 6472, f. 905-1, part 1. J.D. Maclean to A.J. Vale, 17 December 1925.

41 Ibid. A.J. Vale to H. Bury, Indian Schools Department, Ottawa, 27 July 1916.

42 Section 4, sub-section 10 of the Northwest Game Act, chapter 141 of the *Revised Statutes of Canada* (1927).

43 PAC, RG 85, vol. 767, f. 5106. Letter of J.H. MacBrien, Commissioner of the RCMP to H.H. Rowatt, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, 26 February 1934.

44 PAC, RG 85, v. 767, f. 5759. R.A. Gibson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of the Interior, memorandum, 9 April 1935.

45 See M. Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981).

46 PAC, RG 85, v. 767, f. 7854. J.P. Brady to the Minister of the Interior, 26 March 1934.

47 See Fumoleau, *This Land*, 246 ff. on this subject.

48 PAC, RG 10, v. 4092, f. 567,205. Headingly to A.F. Mackenzie, 10 July 1936.

49 Slobodin, *Metis of the Mackenzie*, 144.

50 Smith, "Fort Resolution," 692.

51 PAC, MG 29, C92, Bowen Papers. "Incidents in the Life of R.J. Bowen." Similar sentiments appear in much missionary writing. See, for example, H.A. Cody, *Apostle of the North* (New York: E.P. Dalton, 1908), 253–72.

52 For an excellent discussion of these attitudes, see R. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978). Also useful is R. Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian–European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1976), chapter 4, "The Image of the Indian."

53 On Cadzow, see the description in T. Riggs, "Running the Alaska Boundary," *The Beaver* 276 (1945): 40–43.

54 PAC, RG 10, v. 6479, f. 940–1, pt. 1. Stringer to Secretary, Department of Indian Affairs, 5 March 1912.

55 PAC, RG 126, v. 37, exhibit 618. Testimony of Joe Jacquot to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry.

56 Yukon Territorial Archives (hereafter YTA), Anglican Church Records, Fort Yukon File. Grafton Burke to J. Hawksley, 12 May 1926.

57 Report of Assistant Commissioner Z.T. Wood, Royal North West Mounted Police, *Annual Report, 1909*, 209.

58 PAC, MG 30 E, vol. 3. N.A.D. Armstrong Papers, Diary 1921, entries 8 July and 20 September.

59 Laura Berton, *I Married the Klondike* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954), 169.

60 For a poetic expression of this attitude, see Robert Service's "The Squaw-man," in *Rhymes of a Rolling Stone* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1929), 150–54. For an expression of this pattern in the early 1950s see Lillian Lucy, "A Story of Old Crow, Yukon Territory, 1950–1953," Unpublished manuscript, General Synod Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, M68–1.

61 On federal government–Native relations in the Yukon, see K. Coates, "Best Left as Indians: Federal Government–Native Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1894–1950," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* (forthcoming).

62 On the philosophical underpinnings of the Church Missionary Society, see Jean Usher, "Apostles and Aborigines: the Social Theory of the Church Missionary Society," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 7 (April 1971): 28–52. Bishop Bompas wished particular attention paid to the needs of mixed bloods, a position rejected by the Church Missionary Society and the federal government. See PAC, Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10, vol. 3906, file 3078, Bompas to the Minister of the Interior, 18 June 1896.

63 K.S. Coates, "Betwixt and Between: The Anglican Church and the Children of the Carcross (Choutla) Residential School, 1910–1954," *B.C. Studies* 62 (Winter 1984–1985): 27–47; and K. Coates, "A Very

Imperfect Means of Education: Indian Day Schools in the Yukon Territory, 1890–1955," in J. Barman, L. Herbert and D. McCaskill, *Indian Education in Canada: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985).

64 YTA, Anglican Church, 79/52. Stringer to Johnson, 24 August 1918.

65 PAC, RG 10, v. 6479, f. 940–1, pt. 1. Stockton to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 29 November 1912.

66 PAC, RG 10, v. 6477, file 929–1, pt. 1. Meek to Indian Affairs Branch, 25 October 1947.

67 Here the Yukon system paralleled that of the Northwest Territories. The education of white and mixed blood children was paid for by a department other than Indian Affairs. PAC, RG 10, v. 6477, f. 929–1, pt. 1. J.D. MacLean to John Hawksley, 21 October 1947.

68 PAC, RG 10, v. 6479, f. 940–1, pt. 1. Stringer to Secretary of Department of Indian Affairs, 5 March 1912.

69 PAC, RG 10, v. 6481, f. 941–1, pt. 17. Scott to Lougheed, 2 May 1921. On Scott's general education policies, see E. Brian Tilley, "Duncan Scott and Indian Educational Policy," in J.D. Wilson, ed., *An Imperfect Past*.

70 PAC, RG 10, v. 6401, f. 941–1, pt. 1. R.F. [*sic*] to Moffat, 11 December 1922.

71 YTA, Anglican Church, St. Agnes Hostel file. Extract from *Mayo-Keno Bulletin*, 8 September 1925.

72 Ibid. The government withdrew its assistance during World War II. Bishop W. Geddes to Dr. H.W. McGill, 27 January 1943.

73 PAC, RG 10, v. 6481, file 941–1, pt. 1. Geddes to Dr. H.W. McGill, 27 January 1947.

74 Ibid. Meek to Indian Affairs Branch, 25 October 1947.

75 PAC, RG 10, v. 1115, Deputy Superintendent's Letterbook, 27 April 1894–16 November 1894. H. Reed to Charles Constantine, 29 May 1894.

76 Extract from R.J. Meek's Quarterly Report, 1 July 1947–30 September 1947, Yukon Record Group (hereafter YRG) 1, Series 3, v. 11, f. 12–22.

77 Crime report, re: Arthur (half-breed), Alleged Breach of Game Ordinance, 11 December 1933, YRG, series 3, v. 7, f. 12–13B. See also, ibid., T.B. Caulkin to Comptroller, Y.T., 26 February 1934. These distinctions were reflected in the official census-taking procedures. See the note attached to PAC, RG 10, v. 6703, f. 452–5. W.E. Bayne, "Indian Census, Old Crow, January 1942.

78 On Native-white relations during the building of the Alaska Highway, see K. Coates, "The Construction of the Alaska Highway and

the Indians of the Southern Yukon, 1942–1950," in K. Coates, ed., *The Alaska Highway* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985).

79 PAC, RG 91, f. 1490, pt. J. Meek to Gibben, 28 May 1947, Yukon Territorial Records.

80 Ibid., Gibben to Hoey, 4 June 1947.

81 Ibid., Gibben to Hoey, 20 June 1947.

82 Ibid., McCrammon to Gibben, 19 August 1947.

83 D.C. Rowat to G.A. Jeckell, 4 June 1945, YRG, Series 4, v. 33, f. 689.

84 File: Mrs. Rowena Lord, Old Crow, 29 April 1950, YRG 91, v. 62, f. 35411.

85 John S. Long, "Treaty No. 9 and Fur Trade Company Families: Northeastern Ontario's Half-breeds, Indians, Petitioners and Metis," in Peterson and Brown, *New Peoples*.

The "Other Side": Ethnostatus Distinctions in Western Subarctic Native Communities[1]

James B. Waldram

Introduction

> I used to say I was Indian, but now they tell me that I can't say this so I say I'm Irish.[2]

The impact of legislated "Indian" status on the Native population of Canada has rarely been examined in detail.[3] Whereas Indian identity in the pre-contact and early post-contact period was expressed primarily in terms of cultural affiliation, the legally defined concept of "Indian" presently lacks any consideration of culture. Initially formulated by the British and Canadian governments as a component of colonial policy, this legal definition has been perpetuated to the present day by the Canadian and provincial governments and most Native organizations. The initial and continuing legal distinction of "status Indian" is a product of political expediency at all levels: the federal government initially needed to identify the "Indian" population in order to administer its various programmes; the provincial governments needed to identify the "non-Indian" population in order to administer their various programmes; and the Native organizations have more recently needed to identify their constituencies in order to affirm their mandate as administrators and representatives. As a result, the aboriginal population of Canada is now roughly divided on the basis of two criteria: cultural affiliation and legal status. The purpose of this paper is to explore the dynamics of the status/non-status distinction within the aboriginal cultural context of the contemporary western Canadian subarctic.

Western Canadian subarctic communities present an historical and cultural context quite different from that of the prairie Native communities to the south. Unlike the latter, the historic division between the Indians and the mixed blood populations is less defined, and a common cultural identity is frequently expressed. It is true that the historic roots of the Métis people can be traced to the subarctic fur trade, and that some Métis of the historic Red River and Saskatchewan populations did expand into the subarctic, especially in the waning years of the nineteenth century. However, many of those considered today to be "Métis," or who claim such an identity, are in many ways culturally synonymous with the Indian members of their communities. It is important to understand that contemporary Native identity is many generations removed from the original intrusion into the subarctic of non-Native fur traders, the paternal ancestors of the historic Métis people. Many "Métis" today have no genealogical links to these historic populations, being the offspring of more recent marriages within the community involving both status and non-status individuals. The years of relative isolation following the collapse of the fur trade in the nineteenth century were sufficient to result in a convergence of whatever distinct cultural elements existed among these people.

In order to understand the full implications of legislated "Indian" status for the subarctic Native population, I have coined the term "ethnostatus" to refer to the range of identities that can be generated according to any combination of cultural and legal status factors. That such a combination exists is evident in the use of the terms "Indian" and "Métis," to identify Native cultural groups, and in the terms "status Indian" and "non-status Indian," to identify Native legal groups. Although most Native people refer to themselves in cultural terms, as either "Indian" or "Métis," they are frequently dealt with by the external agencies dominant in their life (eg. governments, Native organizations) within the context of their legal status. The present range of identities adopted by, or assigned to, Native individuals and/or groups are not necessarily mutually exclusive or fixed. The least problematic group of Native people are the status Indians, who characteristically claim an "Indian" cultural identity. However, many non-status Indians also claim an "Indian" cultural identity, while others claim a "Métis" cultural identity. In some cases, individuals may consecutively or simultaneously lay claim to both an Indian and a Métis heritage. This fact is highlighted in the words of one self-identified "Métis" resident of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, who recently stated at a community meeting that, "We're all Indians here. No one should have any special rights." The concept of ethnostatus argues for the recognition of the role that an externally generated identity, legal Indian status, can play in the expression of Native ethnicity. As this paper will demonstrate, in many communities the superimposition of the legal definition of "Indian" has become a cause of friction among the otherwise culturally-homogeneous western subarctic Native population.

The Roots of Ethnostatus Distinctions

Prior to the arrival of the European in North America, subarctic Indian identity was expressed primarily in terms of kin group or band affiliation. While a clearly defined concept of tribal identity did not likely exist, it is apparent that Indian bands recognized those who were culturally or linguistically similar to themselves as being members of their "tribe," while simultaneously recognizing those who were culturally or linguistically dissimilar as being outsiders, often to be feared and avoided.

With the superimposition of European colonial structures onto Indian North America, the need to recognize Indian status was formulated, and the beginnings of ethnostatus distinctions became evident. The first legislation to define "Indian" status was "An Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of the Indians of Lower Canada," passed in 1850 by the Assembly of Canada. The first federal act defining "Indian" status occurred in 1868 and included not only "all persons of Indian blood," but also "all persons residing among such Indians, whose parents were or are, or either of them was or is, descended on either side from Indians ... and the descendants of all such persons."[4] In this case, the inclusion of certain mixed blood individuals as "Indians" is evident.

As the mixed blood populations grew, the British and later Canadian governments found it increasingly necessary to determine the identity of these individuals. With the advent of the "numbered" treaties and the scrip process in western Canada, the bureaucratic distinction became more refined. In making the distinction between those entitled to receive treaty and those entitled to receive scrip, factors such as lifestyle, language, and residence, or in a word, culture, were employed. Also employed was a self-identification criterion. In determining who would sign the treaties, those mixed blood individuals "who lived as Indians and who so wished were included."[5] Those who identified as "Métis" and who were considered "Métis" by others were allowed to receive scrip. At this time, the question of identity was still very amorphic, and mixed blood individuals had some freedom in asserting the identity they wished.

Slobodin has discussed in detail the distinction between the Red River Métis and the Northern Métis which was developing at this time. It is evident that the northern mixed bloods, those with little or no historical or cultural link to the Red River population, saw themselves more as "Indians" than "Métis." A good example of this is found in the negotiations of Treaty Three with the Ojibwa of Northern Ontario. The Ojibwa successfully argued on behalf of their mixed blood kin that the latter should also be admitted to the treaty. As late as 1920 in Saskatchewan, those mixed blood individuals who had yet to receive scrip were given the option of registering with the federal government as "Indians" and acquiring band membership. The question of membership at this time was "based upon socio-cultural considerations and the choice of people of aboriginal ancestry either to be treated or not to be treated as Indians."[6]

The passing of the Indian Act by the Government of Canada in 1876 was the most important factor contributing to the formation of ethnostatus distinctions among the Native population. Concerned with determining the group of aboriginal peoples for which it was responsible, the Government of Canada developed a new legal definition of "Indian." The original Act included within it a provision which excluded certain mixed blood individuals as "Indians." For instance, it states,

> . . . that no half-breed in Manitoba who has shared in the distribution of half-breed lands shall be accounted an Indian . . . and that no half-breed head of a family (except the widow of an Indian, or a half-breed who has already been admitted into a treaty), shall . . . be accounted an Indian, or entitled to be admitted into any Indian treaty.[7]

According to Section 2 of the current Indian Act, passed in 1970, an "Indian" is "a person who pursuant to this Act is registered as an Indian." Further, the Act contains within it provisions whereby "Indians" can become, or be forced to become, non-Indians. For instance, Section 12(1)(b) determines that any "Indian" woman who marries a non-Indian ceases to be an "Indian," as do their offspring.[8] The option of voluntarily surrendering "Indian" status is expressed in Section 109, under a process known as "enfranchisement." The only case in which a non-Indian may become an "Indian" occurs when a non-Indian female marries an "Indian" male (Section 11(1)(f)). Hence, according to the

Indian Act, cultural affiliation, self-identification and other factors used during the treaty process to determine who was an "Indian" were and are no longer applicable. The definition is strictly a legal one. As Jaine notes, the various versions of the Indian Act and its predecessors since 1868 have served to establish and recreate a "charter group of persons based in part on blood content and lifestyle but ... more predicated on kinship."[9] However, "kinship" as expressed here must be understood in a strictly genealogical sense: Indian status passes only through the male line, regardless of cultural affiliation. Nonetheless, it is evident that there exists a large, if undefined, body of individuals who see themselves, and are seen by others, as "Indian" in the cultural sense, but who are not legally "Indian." These individuals are prohibited from receiving the variety of services provided exclusively for those with the legal recognition.

In the arena of Native politics, we have seen in recent years a change from a mild pan-Indian philosophy of the 1960s to one that actively affirms the validity of status distinctions.[10] When Harold Cardinal wrote in 1969 that status distinctions were "legal hocus-pocus" that served only as a "divisive force" among Canada's Indians, he may have been expressing the hope for the development of a pan-Indian identity.[11] However, as Lussier has indicated, pan-Indianism was a short-lived philosophy in western Canada, and was never adopted by the Native organizations primarily because they had internalized these status distinctions:

> Granted, attempts were made [to adopt pan-Indianism] but the Indians who are legally and not racially or culturally defined sought to preserve their treaty rights and Indian Act benefits. And rightly so. The Metis organizations that were established in the late 1960s had their own objectives — not one objective stressed a request for Indian status — the Metis did not want to become Indians. The Non-Status have as one of their objectives the desire to be re-instated into the status fold. But the Indians did not and still do not want them.[12]

Further, the term "Indian" was adopted by the National Indian Brotherhood to refer exclusively to status Indians according to the Indian Act.[13] All other people of aboriginal descent (excluding Inuit) were considered to be "Natives," regardless of cultural affiliation or self-identification.

The Canadian Constitution of 1982 compounded the issue, since Section 35(2) only identified two categories of subarctic Native people: "Indians," and "Métis." As a result, some Métis political organizations have embarked on an enumeration programme to identify those "Métis" for the purposes of the Constitution. Those considered to be non-status Indians may be excluded in the new definition of "Métis." This has contributed to a growing desire by non-status Indian politicians to leave the Métis organizations of which they are now members and form their own organizations. Some Métis have also argued for such a division.

The Native mosaic in Canada is exceedingly complex. Those individuals who are "Indians" according to the Indian Act are referred to as "status" or "registered" Indians. Most status Indians in the western subarctic are also "treaty Indians," or individuals whose ancestors signed treaties and who retain Indian status under the Indian Act. The terms "status" and "treaty" Indian are often used interchangeably, even though each denotes a somewhat separate body of rights and privileges. However, in many ways they are very similar, since to have "treaty" status implies "Indian" status. For the purposes of this paper, references by other authors to "treaty" and "non-treaty" Indians should be considered comparable to "status" and "non-status" Indians, respectively. All other people of Indian ancestry are not legally "Indians," although two other categories exist. The "non-status Indians" are those considered to be "Indian" according to informal, non-legal criteria (such as cultural affiliation), including those who have legally been disentitled for registration under the Indian Act. Despite the lack of legal recognition, many of these individuals refer to themselves simply as "Indians." The "Métis" are a group which includes descendants of the historic Red River Métis population, but which in more recent years has broadened to include other individuals, including those who might be non-status Indians.[14]

Here, then, are the roots of the ethnostatus distinctions among the Native population in Canada. While this discussion has been brief, and has simplified a much more complex situation, it is now apparent that the pre-contact Native population has been dissected into different ethnostatus groups and has been maintained as such as a result of the actions of the British and Canadian governments, provincial governments and various Native political organizations. The federal government insists on administering primarily to status Indians, and the provincial governments have reluctantly taken over responsibility for Métis and non-status Indian programmes. The various national, provincial, regional, and local Native organizations have actively sought out those individuals who fit their definitions for inclusion under their respective mandates.

When we move from the political arena in which the various governments and Native organizations have determined and maintained ethnostatus distinctions to the level of the small subarctic Native community, it becomes apparent that these distinctions are intensified, and magnified, because of the close physical proximity of the people and the strong kin ties that cross-cut the population. As previously indicated, for government and Native politicians, ethnostatus distinctions serve primarily to indicate whom one is responsible for, or to, in a political sense, although they also serve to reaffirm one's *raison d'être*.[15] In a small community, these distinctions pervade everyday life, and the whole social, economic and political fabric can be disrupted.

The Cultural Homogeneity of Western Subarctic Native Communities

In many communities of the western subarctic region, there exist few cultural differences between those we label "status Indian," "non-status Indian," and "Métis." Even though such labels are occasionally heard, they are usually offered in the context of politically related activities, and are not reflective of the cultural conscience of the community. In terms of cultural identity, most subarctic Native people either do not recognize the legitimacy of legal status distinctions, or where they are recognized, often ignore or circumvent them. There are, however, certain spheres of community life in which these distinctions are brought to the forefront, and which cause tension among community members. The existence of a common cultural identity often serves to reduce tensions, but not in every case.

Prior to the early 1960s, before either government or Native organizations became really active in the north, ethnostatus distinctions were of minor significance. For instance, in discussing the situation in Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, Kew stated the following:

> I have distinguished between Treaty Indians and Metis since they differ significantly in place of residence and in legal status. However, for most purposes, the Metis and the Treaty Indians may be considered as a homogeneous group. At Cumberland House itself, the small number of permanently resident Treaty people is socially and culturally part of the larger Metis group.[16]

Similarly, for Northern Alberta, Card noted that,

> Without Treaty, reservations, and the Indian services of government, there would be little basis for distinguishing between Indian and Metis who are native to the Lesser Slave Lake area.[17]

Finally, Honigmann, in his general description of the subarctic, clearly recognized the homogeneity of the Native population:

> Indian-Metis populations in Subarctic communities of the 1960s revealed no clear-cut evidence of being stratified in socially ranked classes that pursued diverse economic interests, maintained social distance from one another, and followed different styles of life.[18]

It would seem as though the use of the terms "Indian" and "Métis" was largely a creation of individuals external to these communities who found a need to distinguish community residents on the basis of legal status. Spaulding, for instance, made this point quite clear when he wrote the following about Ile-à-la-Crosse, Saskatchewan:

> Although the name "Metis" is not used by the people of the settlement to describe themselves, I have adopted it here in conformity with its general use by administrators, missionaries, and social scientists as a euphemism for "half-breed" and as a means of distinguishing Treaty "Indians" from non-Treaty "Indians."[19]

Spaulding, and the other academics who have done the same, were criticized by Dyck, who argued that distinctions between the various categories of Native people were very real. However, in his critique, Dyck appeared to be concentrating on Plains Indian and Métis groups, utilizing position papers and other documents of Native organizations which were arguing for the maintenance of these distinctions. With respect to subarctic Saskatchewan where the historic, separate political identity of Indian and Métis populations was less defined, Dyck stated:

> Even in the northernmost part of the province where a modified version of reserve administration was introduced only

> quite recently, the distinction between those who are registered Indians and those who are not have *become* important and objective facts of life for Indian people [emphasis added].[20]

In discussing the evidence for the cultural homogeneity of the western subarctic Native population, only the more highly visible cultural components can be examined. These include self- or group-identification, linguistic affiliation, kinship and marriage patterns, friendships, economic partnerships, residence location, and so on. It is believed that these components adequately represent a deeper community conception of cultural homogeneity.

Self- or group-identification are probably the most direct and reliable expressions of cultural identity, and they encompass in a general way all other cultural aspects. Exclusive of externally-generated concepts, the general tendency among much of the subarctic Native population has been to recognize the cultural synonymy of those who are legally "Indian" and the other Native members of the community. Slobodin, writing on the Métis of the Mackenzie District, Northwest Territories, stated the following:

> A consensus among the people of the North, including those called Metis, would, it is believed, agree that Metis are non-treaty Indians and unlisted Eskimos; that is, persons of Indian and Eskimo ancestry who are not in the legal position of Indians and Eskimos.[21]

More recent research has uncovered a similar pattern of more or less synonymous cultural identity among ethnostatus groups. Working also in the Mackenzie region, Derek Smith described the Métis in 1975 as being "culturally aligned with the aboriginal groups to which they are related."[22] Acheson described the situation in Old Crow, Yukon, as follows:

> The designation Metis (mixed bloods) is not used locally, and the Metis in Old Crow have never formed a large, distinct, or self-identified group. The local Indians usually refer to them as "half-breeds" or as being "on the White side," referring to the legal status of those with White or White-status fathers.[23]

Similar observations have been made with respect to subarctic Native communities in the prairie provinces and in northwestern Ontario.[24] James Smith accurately described the situation when he stated that many Métis in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan "are linguistically, culturally, and genealogically identical to Treaty Cree or Status Indians."[25]

Language as an indictor of cultural homogeneity is also very valuable. Linguistically, it is evident that in subarctic Native communities the local Indian language has been the first language of all residents and in many cases has remained the *lingua franca* despite an increasing proficiency in English (and to a lesser extent, French).

Kinship and marriage are important indicators of cultural homogeneity. In this area, the establishment and maintenance of kin ties across the legal boundary has been effectively promoted through marriage. Further, in the selection of marriage partners, legal status seems not to be a criterion of any merit. Driben comments on this fact in the context of a northern Ojibwa community in northwestern Ontario:

> ... it is clear that marriage forges intimate links between the people who possess Indian status and those who do not ... To put it simply, there is absolutely no prejudice against either status or non-status Indians inside the community.[26]

In describing the Cree community of Chemawawin (Cedar Lake) in northern Manitoba, Hlady noted that Métis power cliques were based on kinship and affinal ties which extended onto the reserve.[27] Similarly, James Smith has described kinship among the Chipewyan as an important mechanism whereby animosities between ethnostatus groups generated by external concerns have been reduced, thus promoting harmony.[28]

Friendship ties also play an important role in integrating communities, since ethnostatus distinctions are rarely made in this sphere. Similarly, economic partnerships are usually based on either a kinship or friendship basis, as opposed to ethnostatus. This is significant in that the area of economics, broadly defined, is one in which the potential for conflict is great, since treaty status Indians have economic rights to natural resources, and other economic and legal benefits, not accorded their non-status kin and friends. Further, legal penalties can be applied to both status and non-status people who together are found to be involved in economic activities that are illegal for the non-status person. Recognizing the possible penalties, economic partnerships that periodically place the partners in a legally untenable position are often formed nevertheless.

Residence location is another important indicator of cultural homogeneity. Only those with legal Indian status and band membership, or those with official band permission, may reside on an Indian reserve. Despite this fact, the reserve boundary is often ignored when establishing residence. Non-status people (including non-Natives) often inhabit reserves with little opposition, usually because they have married into a residential group. Similarly, it is not uncommon to discover status Indians living off-reserve on adjacent lands with non-status people. A pragmatic approach to the establishment of residence seems to be in operation.

Many subarctic Native communities are composed of both a reserve and a non-reserve area adjacent to or near each other. In most cases, the reserve boundary is an imaginary one, not readily recognized by individuals moving across it. In the case of non-reserve Native communities where there have not been any government-sponsored housing projects, only rarely is there the development of separate status and non-status areas. Houses are often intermingled, and little notice is taken of legal status distinctions.

Briefly, then, these are some of the more visible indicators of cultural homogeneity among the subarctic Native population. From this information, there appear to be few, if any, cultural differences between the "Indian" and the "Métis" populations. Further, it is evident that legally defined "Indian" status plays little or no role in the cultural expression of the residents. They often see themselves as one people, and the imposition of legal status definitions as another absurdity perpetrated by "the white man." In this sense, the "ethnic" component of the ethnostatus distinction, or the tendency toward cultural homogeneity, acts toward the maintenance of harmony and the mitigation of problems arising out of the superimposition of legal status definitions.

The Impact of Legal "Indian" Status

Despite the cultural homogeneity of many western subarctic Native communities, the superimposition of a legal definition of "Indian" status has effectively divided the population in two, and has resulted in a great deal of tension and conflict. At the core of the problem is the differential treatment of the status Indians, and the Métis and non-status Indians, by the appropriate level of government in areas such as social assistance, housing and infrastructural development, education, and health care, and the application of somewhat different laws to these separate groups. The Native organizations have also internalized these distinctions, and tend to offer their services and programmes along status lines as well. Further, some Native organizations have attempted to create identities among subgroups of a community's population in order to "represent" them. These factors have served to undermine the cultural homogeneity of these communities, by creating conflict situations in which cultural considerations are no longer appropriate. Individuals on either side of the legal boundary are made to feel that they are, in fact, different from each other.

The differential delivery of federal and provincial government services to subarctic Native communities underlies most of the problems created by legal status distinctions. Service delivery tends to highlight the "status" component of the ethnostatus distinction, since services are usually offered along strict status lines. Since the federal and provincial governments are responsible to the status Indians and the Métis and non-status Indians, respectively, there is often a duplication of services and programmes in a given community. However, the quality of these services and programmes are often widely disparate, leading to conflict between members of ethnostatus groups who see themselves as having equivalent needs. Such a situation has even occurred in the Territories, where the federal government is responsible for all residents through the Territorial Councils. David Smith has described this situation for Fort Resolution, Northwest Territories:

> Since the Second World War the life situation of most Metis and most Indians who joined them in Fort Resolution has become much the same; however, the legal distinction between treaty and non-treaty status, which has roughly distinguished the Indian from the Metis population, has become more important. In general, treaty people receive more assistance from the federal government. This form of governmental discrimination has exacerbated bitter feelings on the part of some members of both groups toward the other group.[29]

Jarvenpa has described a similar situation for northern Saskatchewan:

> Differential rewards and expectations of government-imposed native policies make the categories "Treaty" and "non-Treaty" increasingly significant dimensions of identity and sources of tension in everyday life. Much interchange between

> communities is not regulated by identities based upon traditional cultural-linguistic criteria.[30]

A frequently mentioned area of conflict is the differential administration of social assistance services. In this area, the status members of a community often have received greater benefits than the non-status members, despite the recognition by the community that the needs of residents are uniform. Also, the assistance rates of the federal government are often higher than those of the provincial governments, and federal assistance for the status Indians is usually perceived to be more easily obtained. Bone *et al.* have described the following scenario for the Chipewyan community of Stony Rapids, Saskatchewan:

> In the case of the Metis, welfare payments are far less than the other ones [status Indians] ... these differences do not go unnoticed by the natives and may be one reason why the Treaty Indians act defensively about the proposed transfer of public responsibility for Treaty Indians from the federal to the provincial government.[31]

As James Smith reports for the Chipewyan of Brochet, Manitoba, the non-status residents were also fully aware of the preferred treatment of the status residents in the area of social assistance, and this was often viewed simultaneously with resentment and with "a matter of pride in their independence."[32]

Perhaps the clearest indicators of ethnostatus distinctions are the physical features of the communities themselves, especially the housing and infrastructure. Very often, the reserve side of a community will look very different than the non-reserve side, depending on the activities of the respective levels of government. For instance, in the Cree community of Easterville, Manitoba, the reserve is characterized by poorly maintained dirt roads, few streetlights, and houses scattered over a large area. In contrast, the non-status section of the community is characterized by constantly graded gravel roads, ample streetlighting, and houses situated neatly in rows along streets.

Housing conditions often differ depending on the legal status of the resident, and housing programmes have been a source of conflict in subarctic Native communities. Describing the situation in Manitoba in the 1950s, Lagasse points to the emerging significance of differential treatment in this area:

> Some of the Metis felt that the Government should give them financial assistance for housing. This attitude undoubtedly stems from the close relationship many have with Indians on reserves. There are often strong visiting patterns between reserves and Metis settlements due to intermarriage. The Indian Affairs Branch program which assists Indians on the reserves to build houses has conditioned the thinking of some Metis to hoping for government assistance.[33]

David Smith's comments for the Northwest Territories support those of Lagasse:

> Inequities in the treatment of Indian compared to Metis were

> especially obvious in the realm of government low-cost housing. Construction began in the 1960s, but until 1969 when the territorial government took over the housing program, it was available to treaty Indians only, despite the fact that the need of many non-treaty families was just as great.[34]

Sawchuk presents the following comment which highlights the manner in which housing and infrastructure can present a noticeable boundary between the reserve and non-reserve sides of a community:

> One Metis I know is fond of drawing these differences to the attention of visitors. Taking them to a reserve near his home, he shows them the relatively new and well-built houses in which the Indians are living. The reserve has no fence or boundary to mark it off, but when driving out of the reserve he points out the dilapidated shacks along the road and says, "We are now leaving the reserve and entering the Metis community. That is how you can tell where the reserve leaves off and the Metis community begins."[35]

It is not always the case that the non-status people receive fewer housing benefits. In recent years, provincial governments and various Native organizations have become increasingly active in providing housing for Métis and non-status Indians. For instance, in some northern Manitoba communities, the Manitoba Metis Federation's housing programme has resulted in improved housing conditions for the Métis and non-status Indians, while the houses for the status Indians have deteriorated markedly.

The delivery of education services and the construction of schools are other areas in which ethnostatus distinctions have become more discernible. The responsibility for education has often been a political football, bouncing back and forth between the federal government and various provincial governments. The education of community residents has often suffered as a result. An early example of this is provided by Lagasse, who cites the case of certain members of the Little Grand Rapids Band in Manitoba, who were status Indians living off-reserve in the community of Pauingasse.[36] Neither the federal nor the Manitoba government were willing to construct a school for these people, believing them to be the responsibility of the other. The situation was eventually resolved with the construction of a federal school.

The attendance of members of one ethnostatus group at schools operated by the level of government responsible for the other has occasionally been an issue. Provisions have usually been made to fund the education of the particular "outside" group, usually with little conflict. However, one example of conflict in this area occurred in a Chipewyan community in northern Saskatchewan in the mid-1970s.[37] In this case, some non-status families accused the government of discrimination because their children had to walk greater distances to school than the status Indian children. It may be significant to note in this case that the instigator of the protest was a member of a Métis political organization from another community (i.e. the concern was generated externally).

There are communities where two schools operate to serve the status and non-status populations separately. Such is the case in Cross Lake, Manitoba, where a new school for the non-status children has recently been constructed. The duplication of educational services in small communities may seem absurd to some, yet this represents a further refinement of the ethnostatus distinction. In the case of Manitoba, this refinement has come about primarily as a response to increasing band control of federal, on-reserve schools. In many cases, the non-status residents of these communities feel that they are being squeezed out and resent band control of the education of their children. The response of the Manitoba Metis Federation to the process of "Indian control of Indian education" has been to request the establishment of separate schools for the Métis and non-status Indian children.

The community of Easterville, Manitoba, is a good example of the local level implications of this process. In 1980, the Chemawawin Indian Band acquired control of the school, to the chagrin of many Métis and non-status Indian members of the community. When the Métis janitor was subsequently released, resentment on the part of the Métis emerged. A number of influential Métis withdrew their children from the school and urged others to do likewise. The next few years were marked by increasing tension, as the band council and the community council (representing the Métis and non-status residents) argued over the education system. Eventually, the Métis requested a separate school for their children, and the request was granted. There are now two schools operating in the community.

The area of economics is one in which the potential for conflict between ethnostatus groups is great. In this area, a curious development is evident. While often resenting the apparently favourable social and economic assistance accorded to the status members of the community, non-status members often invoke their lack of status, and therefore lack of preferential treatment, as an explanation for their self-perceived greater independence and economic well-being. Dickman discussed this perception in the Saulteaux community of Berens River, Manitoba:

> It seems that as time passed, benefits were increasingly extended to Treaty Indians by the Federal Government and jealousy and rivalry between the two groups became more pronounced. This was possibly hastened by the gradual decline of traditional economic activities. Most of the programs which attempted to fill the vacuum in economic activity among the Treaty Indians, such as housing, were not available to the Non-Treaty. The Non-Treaty became more active in pursuing alternative occupations, such as commercial fishing. Some of the Non-Treaty, and some Government people, claim that because the Non-Treaty had fewer benefits available to them, they became less dependent upon subsidized living than did the Treatys, who always had easier access to Government assistance programs.[38]

Economic competition between members of ethnostatus groups is also common. Sawchuk described a Manitoba case in which several Indian bands were granted approval to develop a taxi service, which would be in direct competition with a number of Métis taxi operators. Subsequently, the Indian bands closed the reserves to the Métis operators, a perfectly legal act, thus ensuring a demand for the Indian taxi service.[39]

In subarctic communities, it has often been observed that members of the non-status group are most often the entrepreneurs or small businessmen. This is frequently resented by the status Indians, who view these entrepreneurs with suspicion. Feelings that the entrepreneur is a "cheat" and "only in it for himself" are common. Alternatively, the non-status people may view the status people in terms of the common racist stereotypes more often emanating from the non-Native community. The status Indian members of a community may be referred to as "lazy" and as "welfare bums" by the Métis and non-status Indian members. Accusations that some status Indians, by virtue of their treaty rights, have indiscriminately killed game are also leveled as an explanation for poor hunting. The accurateness of these perceptions may be questioned, but this is not the issue. The issue is that negative stereotypes have developed along ethnostatus lines, promoting disharmony in these small communities.

The area with the greatest potential for distinguishing ethnostatus, and for generating conflict in small communities, is that of politics. While band councils to represent the status Indians have existed for many years, political bodies to represent the Métis and non-status Indian residents of subarctic communities are more recent. The distribution of jurisdictional powers, the question of the right to representation of the whole community, and the need to co-operate for community-wide activities are areas in which ethnostatus conflict often develops.

Driben has described the manner in which ethnostatus distinctions have complicated the political situation for the northern Ojibwa of Aroland, in northwestern Ontario. Aroland consists of both status and non-status residents, and is a non-reserve community represented politically by the Aroland Indian Association. The Association has recently encountered difficulties dealing with the federal government because it includes non-status Indians in its representation. The people at Aroland, in attempting to secure some form of land tenure, were placed in a distasteful situation: they were told that, if a reserve were granted, some of them would become "trespassers." Further, the federal government saw the existence of a significant body of non-status people as an impediment to the granting of land tenure. The people themselves wished to remain as one community since they made no distinction whatsoever between those with and those without Indian status. However, when faced with a referendum to decide on the type of land tenure they wished to pursue, one essentially a reserve that would force out the non-status, and another that would keep the people united, they voted by only a slight margin to remain united. Driben has indicated that the vote followed very closely status lines within the community, perhaps indicating the beginnings of a potentially disruptive ethnostatus distinction fostered by the demands of the external political process.[40]

James Smith has described the problems inherent in developing a community-wide representative political organization in Brochet, Manitoba, in the late 1960s, with particular reference to animosities between the status and non-status segments of the community.[41]

In my discussion of the development of "political differentiation" in Easterville, Manitoba, I cited a number of examples in which separate status and non-status political organizations were at odds, to the detriment of the overall community.[42] Prior to the relocation of the community in 1964, the political organizations were not very active and therefore operated with little conflict. However, subsequent to the relocation and development of the new community, the federal and Manitoba governments became increasingly active in the community, politically polarizing the people according to legal status. As the activities of the two councils expanded, conflict developed in many areas, including economic development, education and law enforcement. A political boundary separating the people has emerged in the community since the relocation. Blaming the "other side" has become a common explanation for community failures.

Conclusion

The issues of cultural identity and legally defined "Indian" status, intrinsic to the concept of ethnostatus, are ones of increasing significance for the residents of many small western subarctic Native communities. In this paper, three important aspects of these ethnostatus distinctions have been highlighted. First, despite references to "Indian" and "Métis" peoples as separate cultural groups, in much of the western subarctic there are few discernible cultural differences between the two. Whatever differences once existed, they have since disappeared, presumably through a process of cultural convergence. Second, within the realm of culture, excluding influences external to these communities, subarctic residents have tended to ignore, or circumvent, legal status distinctions that purport to create subgroups among them. Third, it is evident that in other spheres of community life, broadly political in orientation, fabricated cultural differences, and more importantly the legal status distinction, have created a great deal of tension and conflict. The disruptions that these ethnostatus distinctions have caused are magnified because of the small population base and intense personal contact typical of subarctic Native communities. Individuals who now find themselves on opposite sides of this cultural and legal boundary are in many ways still accustomed to thinking in terms of kinship. As a result, the cultural fabric of these communities has been brought into question.

The recent proposals to amend the Indian Act may have important consequences for the communities of the subarctic. It is likely that a substantial number of those individuals presently lacking Indian status will obtain or regain this status, and will therefore fall under federal jurisdiction in the delivery of programmes and services, and under the status Indian organizations for political representation. The result might be an improvement in relations between many residents who presently find themselves on opposite sides of the legal boundary. However, depending on the criteria used to determine who should obtain or regain legal status, a smaller but significant number of the non-status people may still be excluded, as the status charter group expands. The act of formally excluding certain individuals from regaining status, while accepting others, can only serve to enhance the distinctions between the status and non-status populations. Ethnostatus distinctions may become even more pronounced, and an increasing cause of tension. A reduction in the size of the non-status population could also lead to a reduction in the delivery of provincial services, and a deterioration in socio-economic conditions for these people. Further, the likelihood that Indian bands will be empowered to determine band membership may lead to the development of animosities between band members and those who are refused such membership. The distinction between "general list" and "band list" status Indians, which at present has no meaning in these communities, may become an area of conflict. New factors that foster ethnostatus distinctions may yet emerge.

NOTES

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2 Jean H. Lagasse, *The People of Indian Ancestry in Manitoba*. 3 volumes. (Winnipeg: Department of Agriculture and Immigration, 1959), 1:56.

3 For the purposes of this paper, the term "Native" is used to describe all people of aboriginal ancestry of the subarctic (including "status Indians," "non-status Indians," and "Métis"). References to "status" people mean status Indians, whereas references to "non-status" people mean Métis and non-status Indians. Where appropriate, the specific category of Native people is referred to by name.

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5 Peter A. Cumming and Neil H. Mickenberg, *Native Rights in Canada*. 2d. ed. (Toronto: General Publishing Co., 1972), 200.

6 Noel Dyck, "Indian, Metis, Native: Some Implications of Special Status," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 12, no. 1 (1980): 30.

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8 At the time of writing, an amendment to the Indian Act which would eliminate discrimination against Indian women, as in the case of Section 12(1) (b), was being considered by the federal government.

9 Jaine, "Membership and Registration," 7.

10 "Pan-Indianism" was an indigenous movement in the 1960s which rejected the various constraints placed upon the Native population by the non-Native population and which emphasized a common Indian culture and identity, regardless of tribal affiliation.

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12 Antoine S. Lussier, "The Metis and Non-Status Indians 1967-1984, and the Metis and the Indians 1960-1984," (Unpublished paper prepared for the Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa, 1984), 20.

13 Lussier, "Metis and Non-Status Indians," 5-6.

14 Joe Sawchuk, *The Metis of Manitoba* (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1978).

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31 Robert Bone, Earl Shannon and Stewart Raby, *The Chipewyan of the Stony Rapids Region* (Saskatoon: Institute for Northern Studies, 1973), 58.

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35 Sawchuk, *Metis of Manitoba*, 42.

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Métis Self-Government in Saskatchewan

Wayne McKenzie

Introduction

In 1985 we observe the one hundredth commemoration of the valiant effort of the Métis of the North-West to defend their rights and their lands at Batoche. That event is being observed by many groups and from different perspectives during this anniversary year. This commemoration is an important symbolic event for our people. It reminds us that after one hundred years our fight is not yet won. The objectives of our people to have our right to land and self-government recognized are not yet realized. We know we are close to achieving these objectives, but we also know that much work remains before our people will see the concrete expression of those objectives in the form of self-determination, economic opportunity, employment, the right to practice our language, and develop our culture with dignity and on an equal footing with other Canadians. I want to outline for you briefly what we have done and what we are doing to ensure that these objectives become a living reality for our people.

The Constitutional Process and Self-Government

As everyone is well aware, the aboriginal peoples of Canada are currently involved with governments in a constitutional process, the goal of which is to entrench rights in the Constitution. The rights the Métis seek can essentially be summarized under two headings. These are the right to a land base and the right to self-government. Under each of these rights are a number of more particular rights which we seek. The process of identifying these has begun. Further work needs to be done internally to work out fully the details of these rights and the understanding of our own people as to how they will relate to their day-to-day needs. The immediate task ahead of us in the next year is to begin the process of negotiating and setting out the general details of these rights in agreements with the federal and provincial governments.

The constitutional process for the past two years has concentrated on attempting to reach agreement on the general principle of self-government to be entrenched in the Constitution. Two conferences have attempted to forge an agreement on this issue but a firm agreement to proceed to constitutionalize self-government is still pending. Our association is of the view that the last draft of the Political Accord and Amendment proposed at the First Ministers' Conference on 3 April 1985 provides a good opportunity to move ahead. We should know by the end of May 1985 whether the Inuit, and the two provinces (Ontario and Manitoba) who are withholding their approval pending broader acceptance by the aboriginal groups will agree to sign the Accord. We are confident that they will and we are optimistic that the proposal will receive the necessary approval and will be entrenched within the next year.

This proposed amendment to the Constitution provides for the following:

a) the entrenchment of the principle of self-government;

b) the details of the rights of self-government to be spelled out in tripartite agreements;

c) the entrenchment of these rights by way of a declaration in the agreement signed by the three parties and complementary federal and provincial legislation which gives the agreements the status of constitutional documents.

Although the procedure to constitutionalize the agreements is cumbersome, the fact that it will be accomplished through complementary federal and provincial legislation will remove any doubts about the legality or the competence of either level of government to legislate for the Métis and will put the agreements beyond legal challenge in the courts.

The Political Accord provides for a process by which governments and the aboriginal peoples are committed to negotiate and conclude agreements on self-government. In the case of the Saskatchewan Métis, we have a personal guarantee from the Prime Minister and the provincial premier that the negotiation process will begin immediately. We also have a guarantee that negotiations will deal with Métis land issues as well as self-government. Since there is no time limit on the process, each provincial association can proceed with negotiations with their provincial and federal governments when they are ready. Negotiations can proceed at a pace in keeping with the needs of their people and with the ability of the organization to proceed with the complex planning which is necessary to implement self-government institutions. As well, since a First Ministers' Conference is not required to constitutionalize agreements, this can be done at the appropriate time in each province.

What is Self-Government?

There has been some confusion arise during the constitutional process about the nature of self-government. Aboriginal organizations have different views of what the self-governing rights mean in practice. The concern of the federal and provincial governments relates to their desire not to upset the existing balance of federal and provincial powers as outlined in Sections 91 and 92 of the British North America Act (1867). A number of provinces have gone on record as opposing the establishment of a third order of government in the constitution with its own separate areas of jurisdiction.

The existing self-government model, that of Indian reserves, is local government with a small land base. Each reserve is an independent entity, some deriving their right to self-government from treaties. In all cases the details of self-government are spelled out in the Indian Act. The only other model is the form of local government provided for in legislation in Alberta and which is practiced on the Métis settlements in that province. Again the land base is relatively small, averaging approximately 150,000 acres per settlement. In each case these aboriginal governments exercise powers similar to those of a municipality. In some areas of jurisdiction they exercise powers less than municipal powers and in other areas such as resource control they exercise more powers than a municipality. These existing aboriginal governments are referred to as "ethnic governments."

The Assembly of First Nations in its presentations and amendment proposals is clearly asking for the recognition of an ethnic sovereign government based on the reserve model with provisions for regional and provincial self-government institutions where appropriate. The Inuit, in contrast, are asking for the right to establish a non-ethnic public government, Nunavut, in that portion of the Northwest Territories occupied by Inuit. The only other Inuit communities are in northern Québec in the Ungava Bay area and in the adjacent area of Labrador. The Inuit in these two areas come under the jurisdiction of the provinces of Québec and Newfoundland, respectively. Again, public government is requested in areas occupied by these people. The Inuit have selected public government as they believe there will be little or no immigration into their traditional lands. Therefore, they will be able to control both the established government and the land areas concerned, and their resources and the development of these resources.

In the case of the Métis there is no united approach on what kind of self-government is desired. The objectives of provincial Métis associations vary within and between provinces. The possible models range from the Alberta model of ethnic land-based local government, to public government in local communities which are predominately Métis, to ethnic government which is not land-based but which encompasses the total provincial Métis community. This community would consist of all the registered Métis in a province.

Aboriginal Self-Government in Saskatchewan

After detailed consultations with our members the following emerges as the self-government model favoured by the Métis and non-status Indians in this province:

(1) an ethnic-based government consisting of local and regional councils and a provincial council;

(2) this government would have a land base as a resource which would be held in a provincial trust in such a manner that the integrity of the resource base could be protected;

(3) there would be a land-use policy allowing local and/or regional councils to have the right to develop the land and its resources and to be responsible for the administration of the policy within the applicable tract of land;

(4) land would provide employment and economic development opportunities for local people, and where desired, lots could be leased on which to establish residences;

(5) royalties, licences, fees and taxes from the development of natural and mineral resources or industries based on that land would go into a central trust fund to be shared by the total membership;

(6) the ethnic government would exercise political autonomy rights entrenched in the constitution but would not form a third order of sovereign government;

(7) this government would derive its jurisdiction from appropriate provincial and federal legislation. It would not enact legislation, except bylaws, but it could implement public laws in its jurisdiction, and establish appropriate administration policies and procedures and administer its affairs. It could also be granted some policy and judicial functions in its jurisdictions;

(8) the government would exercise its authority through self-governing institutions designed to deliver programmes and services to achieve the social, economic and political objectives of the Métis;

(9) institutions would be local, regional or provincial depending upon what is practical and indicated in relation to each self-governing insitution;

(10) the government would be a democracy based upon the concept of extending the franchise to all adult members by way of the ballot box and secret ballot;

(11) the government would have appropriate tax rights in its jurisdiction and would enter into fiscal funding agreements with both the federal and provincial governments for resources for those institutions and programmes which are supported from the public coffers;

(12) this government would be responsible to its own electors and not to the provincial or federal governments (as is now the case) for its expenditure of funds and for the delivery of services. This latter factor is one of the most serious barriers to the responsible and appropriate use of funds by aboriginal organizations. The bureaucratic restrictions placed on the use of resources and the delivery of services is one of the reasons for the indifferent success of many existing Native-run programmes and services.

Self-Governing Institutions

To exercise self-government it is necessary to have self-governing institutions as the vehicles through which self-government is practiced. The Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS) has been aware of this fact for some years now and has kept this in mind when it was developing the existing network of institutions which are delivering services and programmes for Métis and non-status Indian people in this province. These have in all cases been developed so that they could be fitted into an overall self-government structure with a minimum of dislocation.

a) Political Institutions

It is of course a foregone conclusion that to exercise self-government the association will need some kind of political institution. We have been examining a number of models for such an institution. No definite decision has been reached on this issue as yet. However, the general direction we received from our membership at a late fall 1984 workshop was that we should build on what we have rather than attempting to develop some new theoretical structure.

If in consultation over the next year it is indeed decided to build on what we have, we will need to make some changes to our existing political structure. Certainly in the rural areas we will need to increase the size of many of the locals if a viable council is to exist for the purpose of delivering specific services to the individual communities. In some cases this will mean enlarging the geographic area covered by these councils. In all cases it will necessitate the involvement of the total membership to ensure viable and effective programmes. We will need to determine how existing institutions fit into the overall structure. Should they continue their arm's length relationship with the political organization, or should they come more directly under the control of our self-government structure by following the more traditional parliamentary model? Regardless of what we decide in relation to the above there will be certain basic principles which will guide the political organization which we put in place:

> (1) it will be a democratic form of government controlled by elected representatives;
>
> (2) these representatives will be elected on a regular basis by ballot box elections;
>
> (3) there will be an executive elected at large to represent the combined interest of all the members and regional representatives elected to represent the interests of constituents in an specific geographic area;
>
> (4) the elected government will pass laws, develop policies and procedures and oversee the delivery and administration of programmes and services;
>
> (5) the elected government will report to and be accountable to its own electorate for the programmes and for their success or failure;
>
> (6) the elected government will oversee and give general direction to institutions of self-government established under its authority;
>
> (7) the Métis people through their elected representatives, at annual assemblies and in other general forums will have opportunity to have an input into the policies and direction of their self-government.

I realize that one of the first questions that surfaces when we speak of such self-government institutions is who is going to pay for all of this? Is the tax payer expected to support still more government from his/her taxes? I suggest to you that to the extent to which my people can become independent and prosper, and thereby enjoy a higher standard of living, so will all Canadians prosper and enjoy a higher standard of living. Funds that are currently used to support Native people on welfare and to fund corrections, child welfare, police, justice and/or a host of other economic, social, and health programmes which are a direct result of Native powerlessness and poverty, can gradually be shifted from these non-productive activities to the newly emerging Native government structures. I would not suggest that we will see immediate changes but I do suggest that within a decade there will be dramatic results.

b) Economic Institutions

The development of viable economic institutions will without doubt be the most central building block in our self-government structure. If our people are to have a viable self-government they must have an economic base on which to build that government. No people can exercise self-determination if they are continuously dependent on some other political organization for all of their economic opportunities, all of their jobs and all of the revenue they need to operate their government programmes. We will of course expect that the federal and provincial governments will enter into tax-sharing agreements which will give us *our fair share* of the tax dollars used to support those programmes which are now funded publicly. We will also look for tax equalization agreements to provide catch-up funding and to make up for the major discrepancies in income and employment which currently exist between Native and non-Native peoples. However, we will need to have the capacity to generate revenue from resource development and from some form of tax base to support our political and cultural institutions, and to provide for some of the leisure and special social needs of our people which are now neglected.

We are now in the process of putting together the plans for launching a significant thrust in Native economic development. We plan to have the structure and the resources to have this programme in place by late summer 1985. Over the long term, I believe this will enable many of our people to become independent and self-sufficient. They will become net economic contributors to the larger society rather than remaining charges on the public coffers.

There are certain basic principles which must underlie the development of an economic base. These include:

(1) the economic development institutions must be controlled by Native people;

(2) the structure must contain a significant financial institution which will be the generator of economic growth and surplus in the Native community;

(3) the financial institution must be managed to protect the integrity of its capital base and to enable that capital base to grow to keep pace with development;

(4) the structure must encourage the retention and recycling of wealth within the Native community;

(5) the structure must provide for general economic development services which include planning, research and field services;

(6) there must be an investment strategy which directs investment into those sectors of the Native community where there is the greatest consumer need and which provide the best possibilities for economic development;

(7) there must be a provincial, regional and local economic strategy if the overall strategy is to respond to and satisfy the development needs of Native people;

(8) there must be an investment strategy which directs some investment into the economy at large to generate opportunities for Native employment and Native entrepreneurship and which at the same time offers good profit potential;

(9) there must be a general human resource strategy which ensures that there are Native programmes to train professional, technical and trades personnel which will be required in the longer term to ensure an adequate supply of Native managers, operating personnel, and entrepreneurs;

(10) there must be a project-specific human resource capacity to assist in mobilizing consultants and advisors, as well as planning and overseeing the specific training requirements of specific projects funded by the economic institutions.

c) Education and Training

In my view the other key building block required to ensure the success of self-government is an education and training strategy. Native people have an inferior level of education compared to the general public. There are few Native professional, managerial, and technical personnel necessary to ensure the successful function of aboriginal government and its self-governing institutions. In the interim we will need to depend on non-Native people for expertise and to assist in managing certain key institutions. In the longer term we must train and develop a pool of experienced, knowledgeable and skilled Native personnel from which the government can draw the many and varied personnel skills required for self-government and related functions. We will always want to employ a limited number of non-Native people to ensure linkages between our systems and non-Native systems and to provide for an easy flow and exchange of experiences, ideas and creative innovation.

At present we have the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research in place providing a limited range of education and training. Current programmes include the following:

(1) at the professional level, a teacher education programme and a pre-University Human Resource Development programme. Other programmes include Adult Education Instructors training, Child Care Worker training, and Social Work training;

(2) at the technical level we have courses in business administration and recreation technology;

(3) at the trades level there are training programmes in agriculture and electrical technology.

We need to put in place a number of additional special education programmes at the professional level to train managers, accountants, lawyers, economists, engineers and other professionals. As well we need to have a community college thrust to train skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen. This may need to involve the development of an aboriginal college and/or university. The principles on which such education and training institutions will be developed include the following:

(l) Native control of institutions;

(2) programmes designed to assist our people to overcome their existing educational and social handicaps;

(3) programmes with some Native Studies curriculum content to promote cultural strengthening;

(4) programmes of an equal standard to those offered by existing public and private institutions;

(5) certification standards equivalent to those set by public institutions;

(6) linkages to present institutions to take advantage of their facilities, curriculum and human resources where possible.

We also need to develop a presence in the public and high school systems. These systems are failing to provide the basic education needed by our children if they are to take advantage of opportunities in education, training and employment beyond the high school level. The exact nature of our role in this vital area of education requires discussion in the Native community and future development.

d) Other Institutions

We currently have in place some of the other institutions we need to link to our self-government structure. These include the Communications programme, the Native Alcohol Council and the Native Housing programme. We must build on these if they are to respond adequately to the needs of our people. Some aspects of the communications programme can be linked to our economic strategy. Housing as well can become a major element in the economic development strategy.

The Native Alcohol Council is only one small piece of a much more comprehensive health and social service system which is needed by the Native community. These services should include:

(l) general family and child welfare services;

(2) foster home programme;

(3) adoption programme;

(4) institutional care and rehabilitation programmes for children, teens, and young adults;

(5) preventive health programmes; and

(6) leisure-recreation programming.

In the area of justice we need to expand and upgrade programmes now in place such as the Native Court Workers programme. To this must be added, where practical, Native operated courts and related services for probation and parole. Within the Métis land base we will also want to assume some policing functions.

e) History, Culture and Language

The strengthening of our culture and the self-image of our people is essential to their success in economic development, employment, education and as stable functioning parents, neighbours, and community workers. To strengthen our culture our people must develop a better knowledge of their own history and in the process gain a better understanding of their own culture. This is essential to building a positive self-image and to providing a base on which the people can build and develop their culture. Culture is not static and must change and adapt to respond to the changing conditions and trends in social and economic systems. However, this can happen only if Native people are able to participate effectively in the mainstream.

Language is the major carrier of culture. For many of our people in the north, language instruction in their Native tongue is an important part of this cultural strengthening. It will have an important impact on their ability to succeed by taking advantage of the social and economic opportunities which will be open to them.

Conclusion

We obviously have much work to do to put in place the structures needed to exercise the right to self-government. Institutions, programmes and systems cannot all be put in place at one time. We will need to begin from our present institutions and systems and build upon them and expand them over a number of years. This means our people will need to establish priorities, work plans and implementation schedules which build these institutions and systems in a rational and systematic way. This is a new adventure for our people. Its success rests in our hands. However, you as part of the body of citizens in this province can assist us or hinder us. You can help facilitate the process by your support, encouragement and practical help when we need it. On the other hand, you can make the process difficult for us by resisting adaptations to your systems to accommodate us, by lobbying with politicians against aboriginal government, or by just being indifferent to the whole process of development.

It is your choice how you respond. For us the choice is not self-government or no self-government. It is clear we must control our own lives if we are to progress as a people. Therefore, the choice for us is between debilitating dependence and independence and self-sufficiency. We have made the choice and we opt for the latter. The issue for us therefore, is not whether we will achieve self-government. Rather, the issues are:

(l) when do we achieve self-government?

(2) how much self-government?

(3) what form will it take?

We are determined that we will become a self-governing people.

Whether the process is smooth or rough, supported or opposed, is not relevant from our point of view. It will happen. The non-Native community must determine whether it wants to share in the benefits of this development or whether it wants to continue to push the ill-conceived policies of assimilation which have been government policy for the past century. The non-Native community must determine if it wants a true integration between equal peoples to take place in Canada.

1885

AND AFTER

In recognition of the centenary of the North-West Rebellion in May 1985, the Native Studies Department at the University of Saskatchewan hosted a conference on the theme "1885 and After."

The conference drew a wide audience, including Native and non-Native scholars who met to reassess the processes leading to the conflict in 1885 and impact of the Rebellion on Native society on the North-West.

New interpretations of the issues and the personalities which affected this era of Native history emerged in the eighteen papers presented at the conference and published in the volume, which is divided into two sections. The first deals with the events leading up to and including the outbreak of hostilities, while the second focusses on the transition of Native society following 1885.

Scholarly in its approach, this book will nonetheless appeal to general readers interested in an important period in the history of the Canadian plains.

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